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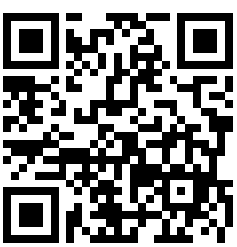

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HOW TO COOK HUSBANDS—YOU OUGHT TO KNOW ABOUT THIS. *See page 30.*

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 575. FOR WEEK ENDING JANUARY 6TH, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

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when drinking Cocoa to have the pure article only, as many so-called "Pure" Cocoas contain added matter that is not only unnecessary, but often positively harmful.

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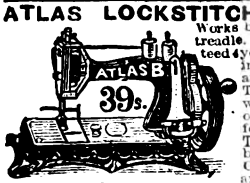

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SHORT STORIES

No. 575.] [One Penny.

For the Week Ending January 6th, 1900.

A PREMATURE RELEASE.

An Incident in the History of "L'Affaire Dreyfus."

It began with one of those frequent occasions on which Skipper Saxey—a plucky little American sailor—found himself stranded in London. His tastes were too literary, and his temperament too Quixotic, for the making of a successful ship-master. He knew this, but stern necessity kept him to the calling, and providing that he came out safe in the end, he rather enjoyed the escapades into which he was so often lured. They gave an extra flavour of romance to the mystic spell of the sea; and this alone, apart from need, made him tackle a good many commissions no other sane man would have looked at.

He was striding briskly along the East India Docks one misty night, his hands in his coat pockets and the eternal cigarette between his lips, mentally figuring out how many days his £5 odd would last, when a quick, nervous step behind attracted his attention, and he pulled up.

Someone was endeavouring to overtake him, and hearing him stop, called to him by name. Saxey faced round, on his guard.

"Have no fear, M'sieur Saxey," said the unknown. "It is a friend, who wishes only to speak with you."

Saxey recognised in the figure that emerged from the fog a man whom he had seen several times lately in

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one or two of the usual haunts of seamen, and asked briefly what his business was.

"If M'sieur will be so good," said the other, "he will come with me to a quiet place where we can talk alone. Or, if he would prefer, we can go to his hotel."

The tall skipper looked the sallow, adipose little Frenchman up and down twice.

"I'm not afraid of *you*," he said, "but I take no risks in this rabbit-warren. If you've something particular to say, come on to my hotel, as you term it. I should say it's a sort of cross between a woodshed and a hayloft. This way."

A street further on the pair entered a rickety-looking public house, went up a creaking stairway and entered a stuffy little attic. Saxey locked the door, turned up the wick of an odorous paraffin lamp, nodded his visitor to the solitary chair, and waited, his whole attitude an unvoiced question.

"It is a leetle delicate, this which I must ask you, captain," his visitor began. "But I think you are not so very—er—rich?"

"Never mind my bank account," said Saxey, with a grim smile. "Let's be hearing your delicate business, and if there's any dollars in it I'm ready, short of actual murder or treason."

"I am afraid it is something like that—'treason' you call it," the other said. "You have heard of l'affaire Dreyfus?"

"Yes, by thunder," said Saxey, "I have, and what I've heard has been enough to make every man who is not a Frenchman thankful for the fact. Well?"

"Then, like so many of your noble countrymen, you have sympathy with the prisoner?"

Saxey acquiesced emphatically.

"Then my task will not be so difficult. I have heard of you at several ports, and when this—commission—was put into my hands, I thought of you at once. You are the man we want. You have at present no ship, and you are not hard to please. We have a ship waiting to take you out if you will dare the risk."

"I tumble," said Saxey. "Some of you revisionist chaps want to liberate Captain Dreyfus without waiting for the verdict of the law. It's a dangerous job, and so you want some dare-devil to pull your chestnut out of the fire."

"I don't know what you mean by tumble, and chestnut," said the Frenchman, "but you understand me, it is evident."

"Have no fear, M'sieur Saxey," said the unknown. "It is a friend, who only wishes to speak with you."

"Yes, that's so," said Saxey. "If there's dollars in the biz, I'm your man. But I must be sure of those dollars. Fixed as I am, I'll have to put my price high. The French Government's a big enemy for one man to dodge successfully. What are you going to do with Dreyfus if I get him?"

"If we can only produce him unexpectedly in Paris at a great revisionist meeting, side by side with his wife, we shall win the day," said the Frenchman. "My countrymen are very—what you call—volatile. The event would carry Paris by storm, and the scoundrels who are sheltering behind the 'honour of the army,' would instantly take flight. If you are successful, M'sieur Captain, have no fear of my Government. You will be the idol of the French people. As to reward, do not trouble yourself. Here are some bank-notes for immediate expenses; twice the amount will be handed to you when you sign your articles for the ship; and ten times as much as that when Captain Dreyfus steps on French soil."

Saxey's eyes opened wide at the roll of notes, value £400. Putting them quietly in the breast pocket of his coat, he said:

"We are agreed, sir. Shall I write you a receipt?"

"No, no," said the other. "Paper is incriminating. We trust in M'sieur's honour. Those behind me have unlimited funds."

"Indeed," said Saxey. "And now for particulars. Granted that I get within sight of the Captain's prison, how do I proceed? Have you made preparations there?"

"M'sieur is—sharp!" said the Frenchman. "Yes. Francs have value, even in the Ile du Diable. We have friends in the garrison of that hell. We have also a friend who will go with you who is the perfect image of Captain Dreyfus. It has taken us months to find this man, and weeks to persuade him, even with gold, to play the part we wish. He will go with you, and on the night when chance favours our friends and the Captain escapes to the place where you are waiting, he and the prisoner will change clothes. You will then put off, leaving him to be discovered by the soldiers, who will search for the escaped prisoner. It will be a strange experience for the double, but, of course, when our triumph comes, he will be released and recompensed. Does the scheme seem so wild now, M'sieur?"

"I must own it's well planned," Saxey said. "The

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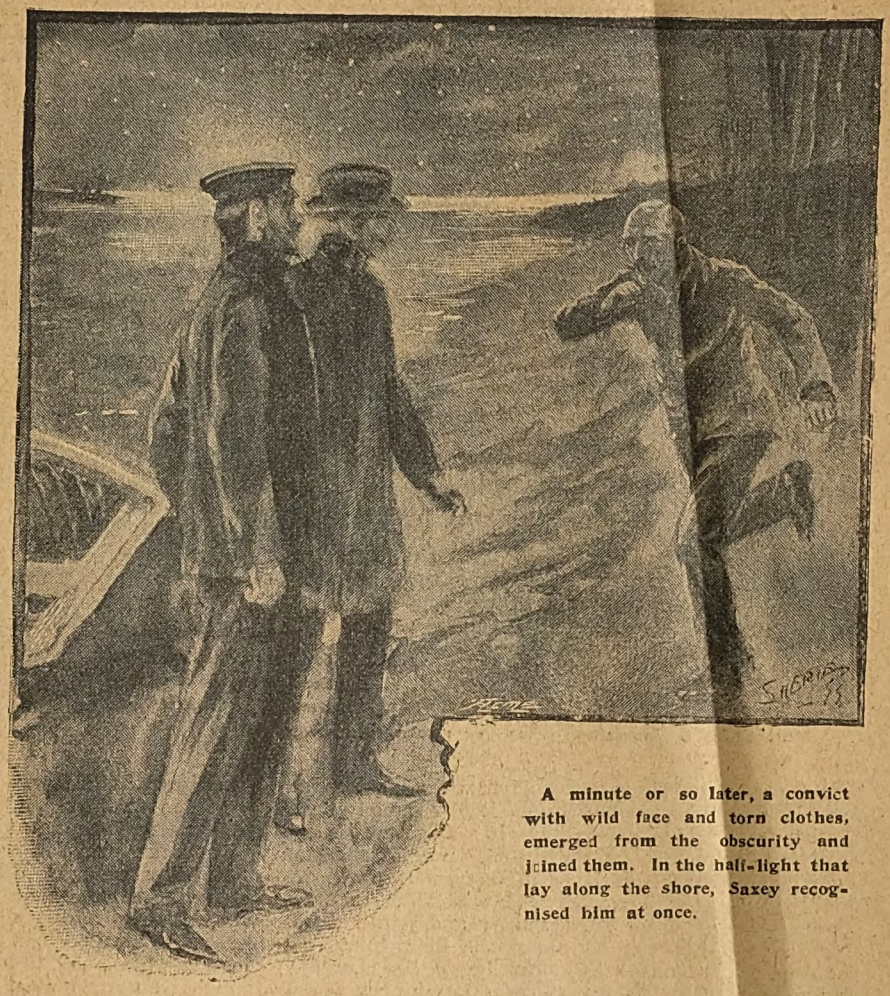
sooner we get to work the better. I'll be ready to start the day after to-morrow."

"Good," said the Frenchman, his eyes twinkling with hysteric joy. "To-night a better day dawns for my misguided country!"

With which patriotic if somewhat mixed declaration the Frenchman departed, promising to call for the skipper at the right time.

Three days later, the *Juno*, a small but well-equipped steam yacht, weighed anchor and stood down the Thames. Her owner, ostensibly, was M. Jules Lervane, a retired gentleman who intended travelling in the South Pacific. Skipper Saxey, her acting master, stood on the bridge in spick and span new nautical attire as she went out. He had the air of a man on whom all the world smiles.

M. Jules Lervane was an eccentric character. The *Juno* made a long and circuitous voyage before she entered the southern seas. Her crew was small, she carried no passengers, and Saxey was allowed to rule all and sundry with a rod of iron. The owner was seldom seen on deck except in the evenings, and was never known to land at any port, and though he and his English skipper held many private consultations over the business in prospect, it was never alluded to in the presence of any of the crew. Saxey often wondered whether they were in the know or not, and the ship's doctor—an Englishman named Watson—often aroused his curiosity for the same reason, but on this point he remained unsatisfied.



A minute or so later, a convict with wild face and torn clothes, emerged from the obscurity and joined them. In the half-light that lay along the shore, Saxey recognised him at once.

The ship routine went on with unusual smoothness, and long before the dreaded penal settlement was approached Saxey had read through all the scientific works he had brought to beguile the voyage.

At last, just as he was finishing the study of Weismann's "Germ-Plasm" for the second time, the low shores of the island were sighted. It needed all Saxey's sea-skill and native cuteness to keep out of danger for the next two days. Prying French gunboats and cruisers had to be dodged or duped, and a week went by before the *Juno* ventured to cast anchor on a sand spit that was hidden from view of the interior by a somewhat high bluff and a thick wood.

This part of the island was desolate and dismal beyond all description, and here it was that M. Jules Lervane was to step into the place of the convict, Dreyfus. The arrival of the yacht had of course been timed by previous agreement, and that night, or any one of the following six dark evenings, the attempt was to be made.

Four nights passed without a sign. The *Juno* lifted gently on the ground swell, to all appearance a deserted ship stranded on an uninhabited island. There was nothing to look at but the restless motion of the sea, the glaring sun in the clear sky by day or the silent stars by night; nothing to hear but the lap of the waves, the cries of the few sea-birds, the murmur of the breeze in the dark wood, and occasionally a faint distant cry from inland, as of some being in mortal pain.

A wailing note of more than usual intensity was heard as Saxey and Lervane beached their boat on the sand the fifth night. It was followed by the booming echo of a distant gun. They shivered when they heard it, although the atmosphere was oppressive as that of a dark oven. Saxey threw himself on the sand and ground his teeth, but neither of the men spoke.

With every nerve and sense alert they waited for the signal that should tell them that Dreyfus had escaped through the outer line of sentries. The time dragged on slowly, and Saxey, unable to read, unable to smoke, chafed under the suspense. He anathematized the dull swish of the ebb tide on the sand, the sighing of the night breeze in the dark wood, the heat, and his own foolishness; he scowled at the glorious dome of stars that twinkled down at him in magnificent indifference.

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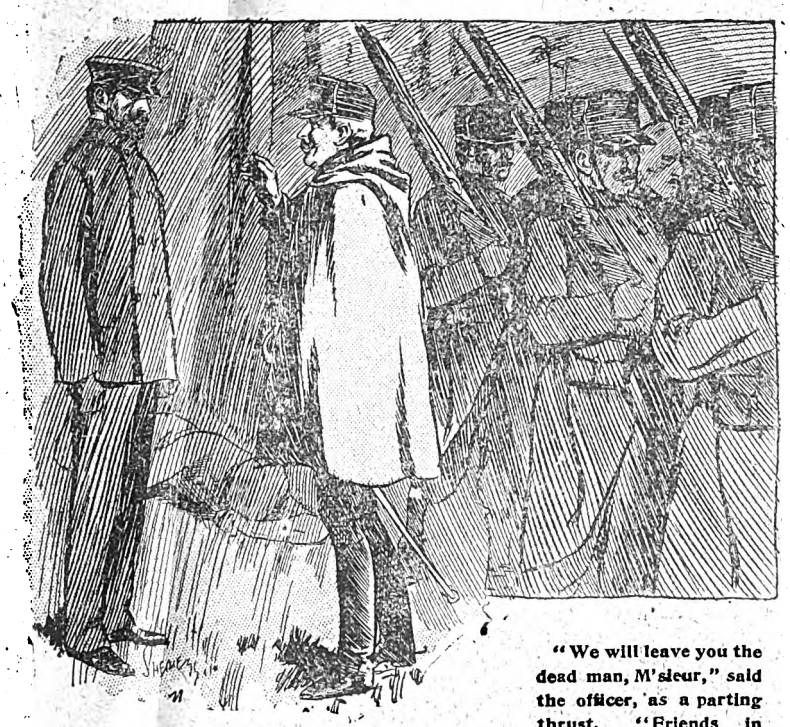

"We will leave you the dead man, M'sieur," said the officer, as a parting thrust. "Friends in Europe may be inquisitive when you return. Au revoir!"

But presently a long, low whistle, with a double rise and fall in its tone, reached them. Both sprang at once to their feet. They answered it. It was succeeded by another and much nearer sound—the sound of someone coming rapidly through the crackling undergrowth. A minute or so later, a convict with wild face, and torn clothes, emerged from the obscurity and joined them.

In the half-light that lay along the shore Saxey recognised him at once. So marvellously like Lervane was he that but for the dress of each the skipper would not have known even then which was the convict, and which the intended substitute. There was no time for ceremony or delay, so he stepped back at once for the boat.

"Be quick with your change of togs," said he to Lervane as the Frenchmen exchanged greetings. "There's no telling how soon we shall have this hornet's nest about our ears."

"We will be swift, m'sieur, fear not," said the convict, ridding himself of the hated prison garb with feverish celerity. "The alarm has already been given. You will have heard the gun. I had then been free an hour, but had not dared to make the signal because I feared that I was being tracked. Here, my friend."

It was at this moment that Fate intervened. Lervane had undressed as quickly as the prisoner, and the two men, clothed as Nature made them, were putting out eager hands to seize each other's attire, when there came a hurried trampling and crackling in the undergrowth around. A dozen excited shouts, a scuffle, and a squad of soldiers were upon them. The two unfortunates made a sprint for the boat, which Saxey already had on the move, but the soldiers were too near. Even before the lanky skipper had time to use his revolver the trio were in the hands of the enemy.

The officer of the squad, a stout, red-moustached man, whose natural joviality had been soured into a very grim kind of humour by the gruesome character of the place, looked his three prisoners up and down carefully. He was apparently nonplussed at the two Messieurs Dreyfus, and still more at the presence of the American, but gradually began to see light. The boat, and the dim outlines of the ship on the sand-spit, seemed good circumstantial evidence. Though he with difficulty suppressed a yawn—the men had been roused from sleep for the pursuit—he smiled meaningly as he said:

"It is strange, gentlemen. I come to seek one prisoner and I capture three fugitives. I look for one Captain Dreyfus and I find two, with a mutual friend. There is more than a mere attempted escape here. There is a conspiracy, there is treachery. Captain Dreyfus has friends in France, and those friends have money. They have also genius. But they evidently do not know how watchful are the guardians of the prison. Confess, gentlemen, that I am right?"

The unclothed unfortunates could only confess.

"And you?" speaking to Saxey. "I can talk English, you hear!"

"I guess you're pretty central," said Saxey sullenly. "Only a fool could help it, who uses his eyes. Yes, we've come over for your blessed convict, and you've euchred us instead. What are you going to do next? If you'll take your man back, you're welcome to him; we shall only be too glad to say good-bye. I wouldn't keep you out of bed a moment, I am sure, on my account. I know when I get to a dead end as well as anybody, and I give you my word that this will be the last time I'll set foot on this cursed spot."

"I shall take back my man, certainly," said the officer, "but which of these two naked ones is he? Perhaps you can tell me that, m'sieur? Whichever I take, I shall certainly have the other shot. Can you tell me, now, which is the real Captain Dreyfus?"

Saxey was in a quandary. Had he known which was which, he would scarcely have liked to say, and he was not sure of their identity himself now. While he hesitated the two Dromios spoke.

"I am the real Captain Dreyfus!" said the convict. "I am ready to return to my cell."

"I am the real Captain Dreyfus," said M. Lervane, the fear of death strong upon him.

"Ah! You both prefer the Ile du Diable to the Great Hereafter!" smiled the officer. "But you make things confused with such a queer agreement. I cannot wait here all night. I have an idea, m'sieur" (this to Saxey), "I cannot tell which is the man I want, nor do I care, so long as one returns with me and one is shot. With you, it is different. I do not wish to be harsh with you, if you are here simply as the tool of others. You might be missed, also, and foreign inquiries and complications are detestable. I am satisfied that if you go back alive we shall not again be troubled with you. But before I

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let you go you must tell me which is the true Dreyfus and which is the double.

"I'm not sure that I would if I could," said Saxey, "and I'm quite sure that I can't even if I would."

"Then, m'sieur, we must see how chance decides. So long as we get the affair ended quickly I do not mind at all which we choose. We shall be sure to secure one traitor and execute another. I love a jest so we will throw the dice for them. We were playing at sunset and I have the ivories here. You shall throw, m'sieur, unless the gentleman will save you the trouble by declaring themselves."

The two men, white-faced but resolute, reiterated their former statements. Each one claimed vehemently, to be the real and only Dreyfus. The soldiers, between their yawns, laughed immoderately. The officer shrugged his shoulders.

"You see, m'sieur," he said to Saxey, in mock deference, "I am compelled to appeal to chance. I need not say that if you refuse I shall reconsider my decision regarding you. Are you ready?"

The tall man, liberated from his captors, took the dice box with an unsteady hand, muttered under his breath, and waited for the signal. The two men were placed against separate trees some distance apart and a file of soldiers with rifles at the ready, facing each of them. The officer stood between his two files and turned to Saxey.

"Now, m'sieur, throw! High for death, low for the prison. First cast for the right hand man."

The American, after a rapid consideration of his position, complied. Unmarried, he might have faced the matter out in defiance, but the thought of his patient little wife in Philadelphia raised a lump in his throat. He rattled the dice and rolled them out on the palm of his left hand.

"Six—four—ten," said the officer. "Now for the other."

The dice rattled and rolled again.

"Five—five—ten! *Sacré!* Again, m'sieur."

Twice more Saxey threw the fatal dice, great beads of perspiration breaking out on his forehead.

"Five—four—nine. Two—six—eight. Right hand file, fire!" shouted the officer.

There was a sharp, unhesitating volley, a swiftly-ended cry of fear, and someone died. The other put on the convict's dress in haste, not waiting to be told. The soldiers closed round him and marched away.

"We will leave you the dead man, M'sieur," said the officer, as a parting thrust! "Friends in Europe may be inquisitive when you return. Au revoir!"

Saxey's answer to this was of too forcible a nature to be embodied in printer's ink. He picked up the body, put Lervane's clothes upon it, dragged it to the boat, and rowed back to the ship. The crew were, of course, anxious to know what the firing was about, but Saxey's strict orders that no man was to leave the vessel had been obeyed. He carried the body down to the cabin himself, curtly informing his questioners that there had been a misunderstanding with the French garrison, and their owner was badly hit. Once in the cabin, and the doctor with him, he locked the door.

"Why, the man's dead!" said the doctor, after a brief examination.

"Hush, I know that," said the tall man, stroking his chin viciously. "There's a good reason for it. But we've got to bluff these compatriots of his if we want to get away from here alive, Watson. This is not exactly a salubrious neighbourhood for our health, I can assure you. You'll read between the lines, I raps, and if you can't I might tell you some day. And the sooner we're off this ship the better. As long as they think the boss is alive they'll obey my orders like so many sheep, and we've got a chance to scoot. You'll report him dangerously ill, for the present—see?"

"I see," said Watson, and went out.

Directly he was gone Saxey turned the body over and looked at the tip of the left ear. There was a small dark mole on it, so small as to be but dimly visible in the electric light. He had noticed that once before, when its owner had ventured on deck.

"Why, man, he's dead!" said the doctor, after a brief examination.

The body was that of M. Jules Lervane. The Ile du Diable still held its famous prisoner.

GEORGE C. WALLIS.

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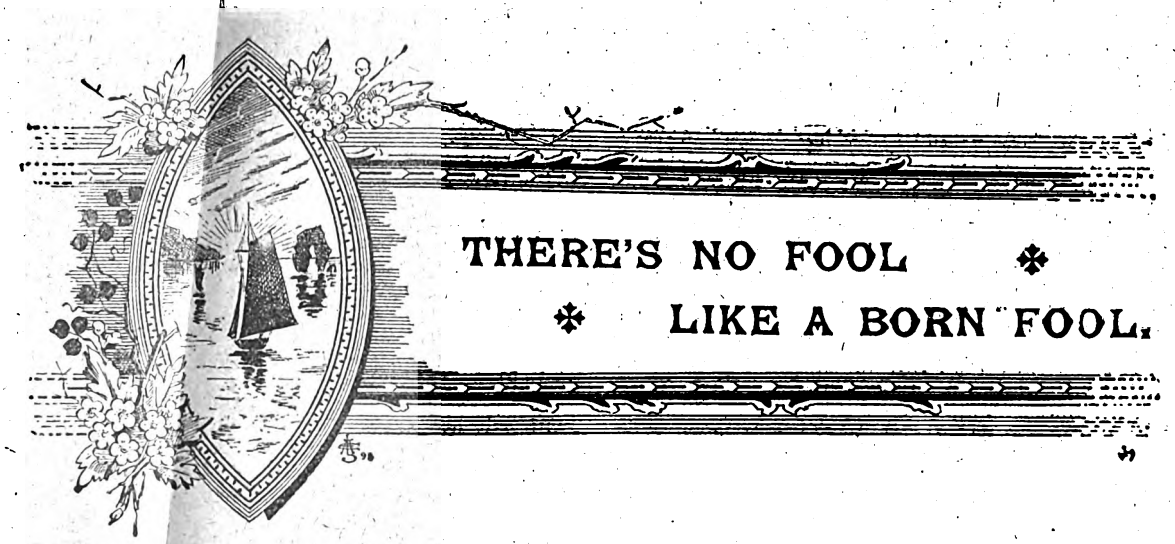

THERE'S NO FOOL ✣ ✣ LIKE A BORN FOOL.

WHO has not, in a measure, committed suicide? Does not everyone kill himself, more or less. Some by too much dissipation; others by working to excess; others by making night day; others by loving those who do not love them. Means of suicide abound; one has only to choose.

I, too, have committed suicide, just like many another, not precisely to the same extent as those whose tragic end is reported in the daily newspapers, but I did what I could.

I had been sent to Paris to study art, by my parents, who were anxious that I should enjoy the advantage of the best French masters at an early stage in my career; and I had been a student in the artists' quarter for nearly two years, having become almost a Frenchman, when I first met Gabrielle, under the chestnut trees of the Luxembourg. When I saw her it was as if a thunderbolt struck me. I laid my heart, my twenty years, my scanty purse, at Gabrielle's feet.

Gabrielle made a face.

I did not notice it, because I loved her.

She condescended, however, to accept breakfast under the arbour at Viroflay, invitations to the theatre, and many articles for her wardrobe.

She gave me to understand that I would be the last of men to be loved if I did not present her with a scarf, earrings, a parasol—two, three parasols. I saw my last sou vanish.

I sold everything that I could realise, including my one and only arm-chair. I was obliged to confide the care of my watch to one of those hospitable houses which we English call "my uncle," the French term "my aunt," and which we art students baptized "the nail" with graphic simplicity.

I raised money on my books. Gabrielle also appropriated my links, my new hat, and the queen of my pipes. She had a way of saying: "Does my big dog wish to please his little Gabrielle?" which was irresistible.

When she found that I was without money, without credit, and even in debt, having vainly exhausted the resources of my imagination to extract from my parents in far-away London an addition to my allowance, she left me calmly, without a word of pity, without a shadow of shame. She was of that class of women called lioness, doubtless because they know how to consume men.

And I loved her! What despair! She had moved away, they told me, to distant, almost unexplored parts which vague and mysterious expression described the Latin Quarter, "the right bank."

I walked with grief in the shade of the garden where I had met her. How dismal it was there now! There were many promenaders, children, lovers, but it seemed to me deserted.

"My life is ended," I said with the *naïveté* of twenty years. "Everything is hollow. Why am I here? I can never again be interested in anything."

I resolved to die! There was nothing left to be done, but choose a suitable way to disappear.

Fumes of charcoal! That was the mode of suicide for girls.

The dagger was very much used. The dramas of the day were full of Venetian, Florentine, Arabian, Castillian daggers, Spanish dirks and Damascus swords, with which the actors killed themselves very decently behind the scenes, and even on the stage.

But I had no money to buy a dagger.

There was the rope. That was vulgar; then, too, the hanged are so ugly.

There remained poison, but what poison? Arsenic was bourgeois, very bad form. The poison of the Borgias would have suited me. Many novels spoke of it. But the recipe seemed to be lost.

Should I jump out of the window? To frighten women and bespatter the pavement! No.

Die by starvation? I had too good an appetite.

I finally decided on a very simple and economical method, one which the mild weather (it was spring) made seasonable; I would drown myself.

I neither breakfasted nor dined on the day of my suicide. I smoked my last pipe, my stock of tobacco being exhausted.

At nightfall I walked down toward the Seine. The water was black. The full moon threw on the river a silvery light. Walking at random, I arrived at the Pont des Arts and resolved to end there a life which was intolerable to me without Gabrielle. The place seemed propitious. The bridge was deserted. Not a boat. Not a lantern.

I leaned against the balustrade and looked at the water running like a flood of ink. It dashed against the piers. I breathed the night air.

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"This is the last time," I said to myself, "and it is such a lovely evening!"

I thought quickly of all I was leaving, of my parents, my friends, my home in dear old dirty London, the art that inspired me, of my youth, and also of my immortal soul. I placed all these on one side, and my recollections of Gabrielle on the other, and the latter were the more weighty; they turned the scale. Tears came to my eyes.

"I must die." I murmured. "Good-bye all! One name more is about to be added to the martyrology of love."

Love! This is the holy name that a youth was giving to his miserable passion, to the absurd child's-play which was leading him to death. It is only later we learn that love lives by sacrifice, that it is the brother of hope, and that, far from killing, it gives strength to live.

I grasped the balustrade and was preparing to leap, when, suddenly, I noticed a young Frenchman standing near me on the bridge, about thirty feet away. Could one not kill himself without being interrupted? Had he come there to play the spy? No, he did not even seem to see me.

He was looking down at the water. The moonlight was so bright that I could see the details of his person and his clothes distinctly. Like me, he wore a large Rembrandt hat, a long coat, and trousers narrowing at the foot. He had a red silk handkerchief, long hair, full beard, a youthful form. He was a student, an artist, like myself. What was he doing there?

He was gazing at the Seine. He raised his eyes to heaven, passed his hand sadly across his forehead, breathed rapidly, took a few steps to the right, then to the left, stopped in the middle of the arch, and seemed to measure the distance with his eye. Was he about to commit suicide, too? Were all the young men killing themselves? The Latin Quarter would soon be depopulated.

I was vexed. Had I not selected this bridge for my personal use? Why had he not chosen the Pont Neuf? However, although the unknown disturbed me, I felt a certain sympathy for this brother in suicide. He appeared to be about my age, and perhaps similar motives had brought him there. The stranger threw down his hat, looked at the moon, passed his right leg over the balustrade. In three bounds I was upon him and pulling his coat tail.

"What are you doing, monsieur? Are you mad?"

He struggled.

"Let me alone."

I seized him around the body and held him.

"Let me alone. Attend to your own affairs. This is disgusting. What are you here for? Go away."

"But," I replied ingenuously, "I have just come to commit suicide."

"What! you, too?"

"Yes, I was about to leap when I discovered you."

He turned and stared at me.

"Ah! this is strange enough," he said as he sat astride the balustrade.

We gazed with curiosity at each other to see how men look who are about to kill themselves. He had a good face in spite of his terrible black beard.

"Love, of course?" he asked.

"Love," I sighed.

"My case exactly, love."

"At our age one seldom commits suicide for any other reason."

"Well, monsieur," he resumed, after a short silence, "since I have the pleasure of meeting a travelling companion, shall we drown together? Only let us measure our distance so as not to risk grappling in the water if one of us, governed by the instinct of preservation, should have the weakness to change his mind after the plunge is made. You know how to swim?"

"Like lead."

"Are you ready then?" he said. "Take care not to bruise yourself by striking against the pier. Stand between the piers. A little farther off—there—that's right. Count, one, two, three. At three we jump. I do not say *au revoir* to you, dear monsieur, but I am charmed to have made your acquaintance—too late unhappily to cultivate it. Well, I am ready."

My co-suicide counted "one—two——"

"Good-bye, Gabrielle," I cried.

But instead of counting three:

"Which Gabrielle?" demanded my unknown friend.

"She for whom I drown myself. What is that to you?"

"Gabrielle of the Luxembourg? Gabrielle who has a little black mole under her left eye?"

"Assuredly," I replied, "Gabrielle whom I love, and for whom I perish."

And I rushed forward, but he stopped me and grasped my arm.

"Wretch, traitor, felon," he shrieked. "You love Gabrielle, my Gabrielle? You have the presumption to commit suicide in her honour, when it is I who have come here to drown myself for her. You have taken Gabrielle from me! Swords! Knives! I want your blood, sir; I must have your blood!"

He danced with rage. He shook his fist.

I observed coolly that, as we were about to die, it would not be necessary to butcher each other. This seemed to him a reasonable argument. He gradually calmed down.

I learned that he was a student, that Gabrielle had abandoned him a fortnight since, at the very time I met her. Naturally, we continued to talk about her.

"Ah! my dear predecessor, what eyes she had, and what a silvery laugh! How jolly, and saucy, and fiery she was!" I babbled.

"What delightful times we had together," he replied; "at Robinson, at Viroflay! She sang like a bird. She had a rose-coloured parasol which cost me a half louis, I think."

"Yes, I know," I interrupted, "what those parasols and many other things cost."

"Well, my friend, it is evident that those gifts have been our ruin."

As one is talkative at twenty, and our hearts were overflowing, we began to discuss women in general, *à propos* of Gabrielle, and our love in particular, *à propos* of women. Our experience was brief; besides, we had perfect and decided theories which we were expounding both at the same time with lofty eloquence.

"How could it be otherwise?" philosophically concluded my rival. "She had a way of looking out of the corners of her eyes which turned me like a glove, and when she said: 'What will my big dog do to please his little Gabrielle?' I lost my senses."

"So did I. She called me her big dog, too, and it produced the same effect on me."

He smiled sardonically.

"My dear successor, I should not be surprised if at

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this very monent a third gentleman were not Gabrielle's big dog."

"Alas!" I replied, "you are an optimist. I am sure that Gabrielle possesses half a dozen dogs of our kind."

At this bitter thought I stove in my hat with a blow of my fist, and my rival tore his hair, a luxury which the abundance of his Merovingian mane allowed him.

"And is it for princesses of this quality," cried he, "that two good fellows like us wish to drink dirty water. That would be too idiotic!"

While jabbering we walked up and down, for the evening was cool. Just then we found ourselves at the end of the bridge, directly in front of the institute.

I spat to show my contempt for the "Temple of Classic Literature." My companion spat also, making a defiant gesture at the cupola.

"And these scoundrels of academicians, will it not delight them to learn that two romanticists with long hair have drowned themselves before their very door? Listen! the more I think, the more I believe that we ought to reflect before taking the fatal plunge. One can commit suicide but once. It is an important affair and deserves more consideration. First I should like to dine, for it is well known that wise decisions are made on leaving the table. There is an admirable restaurant near the Grande Chaumiere, which is open all night. My nurse's sister manages it. I have credit there, and can even take a friend. Will you accept?"

"Monsieur," I rejoined, "you are not a serious suicide. Go and dine. Let me drown in peace. Beside, I am not hungry."

I lied. I was hungry as a wolf, and my stomach was howling.

"My nurse's sister," continued my predecessor, "has a more abundant cuisine than can be found anywhere else in Paris. There are miraculous roasts, paties of gigantic proportions, delicious blood-puddings, juicy ham, not to speak of the fried potatoes which are ideal, the Burgundy cheese, and wine which would make you forget all the Gabrielles in the world," he insisted, ashamed of his disloyalty, and not wishing me to kill myself alone.

During this enumeration, hunger pressed me most cruelly, and I felt much admiration and tenderness for madam, the sister of my rival's nurse. However, I resisted.

"Well, monsieur, may you enjoy your dinner. Adieu."

Without paying any attention to me my companion continued:

"After the ham, the pudding, the patie, what do you say to a punch, and a fragrant pipe."

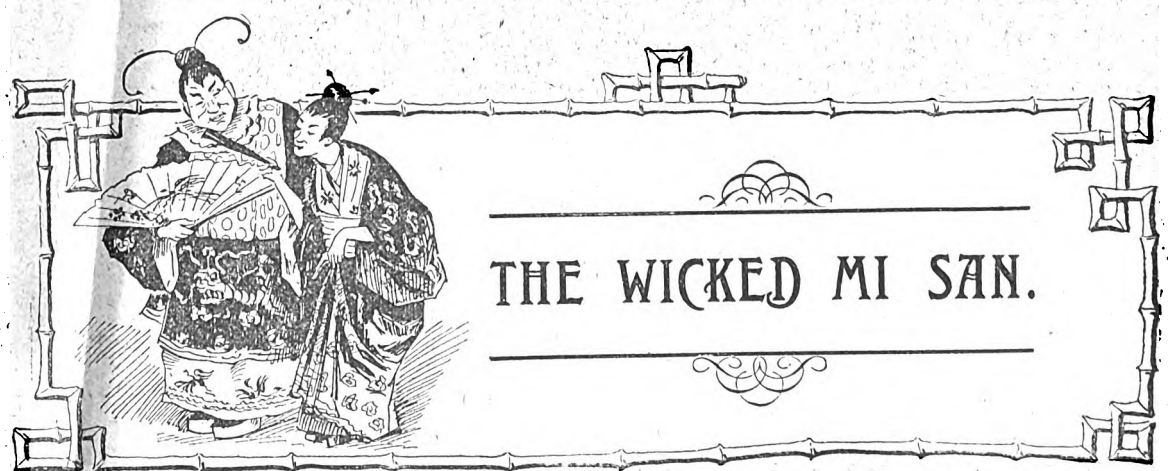
"Do you use lemon?" I asked in a feeble voice.

"Lemon? Punch would not be punch without lemon. Much lemon, my boy quantities of lemon."

With long strides, arm in arm we regained the Latin Quarter by the light of the moon.

"It is strange," I said to my rival, "there is nothing like suicide to give one a good appetite."

N. F. STUTTE.



THE WICKED MI SAN.

MR. AND MRS. CLEMENCE were going home for a year's leave—and going to take their two children with them. Mr. Clemence was a partner in a great firm of merchants who had a branch at Shanghai and had been out there for many years.

He had met his wife on one of his runs home and she had come out a year later to marry him. She liked the life out there very much. It seemed really very like England.

The European part of Shanghai has wide streets and fine buildings—the public gardens are well planted and well kept—and all along the wide boulevard by the quay trees are planted just as in a Continental town.

Then in Shanghai there is a really good cold season; in fact it is often too cold to be pleasant, and in the winter you have to wear much the same clothes as you do at home and as many furs as you can. Then in the summer you go away to a little seaside place, Pient Sin, where many other people of Shanghai go too, and you have shrimping parties and bathing parties and you all take there with you your Chinese carts and ponies—such sweet little ponies, that go so fast!

Life is by no means devoid of amusement in the north of China. In the winter the men have shooting parties and go away on the swamps further north for snipe; but if your husband is lazy or busy, that will not prevent your having game, for it is very cheap in the cold weather in Shanghai, and sometimes the market is simply crowded with snipe.

Europeans there have good, well-built stone houses in gardens, like villas at home; they keep cows and grow vegetables; the long shady road that leads to

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the Bubbling Well is like nothing so much as the London Road from Brighton through Preston Park; the houses and the gardens are just as good and just as large, and thoroughly comfortable. There are a few European shops, not very many, but of course you can order anything you want, to be sent up from Hong Kong by the weekly mail steamer.

Mrs. Clemence bought silks and furs from the dealers in Shanghai to take home—most lovely embroideries and sable skins. The Russian fur dealers take off the sable tails and sell the remainder of the skins to Chinese dealers for absurdly small prices, and Mrs. Clemence had an evening cloak lined with sable that would have cost a fortune at home. People out in these distant colonies always talk of "home," as if it were a Paradise, yet when they come back they miss the clear, blue sky of North China and the innumerable comforts they have left there and which cost so much more to procure in England.

The Clemences had looked forward to and discussed this leave, for more than two years before it came off. One difficulty was about servants on the voyage. To-to, the little girl of three, was so devoted to her Chinese amah; and yet what on earth should they do with her in an English house? To-to would make herself a nuisance on the voyage if she did not have Mi San, there was no doubt of that. Baby was really too little to care.

"That's all very well," said Mr. Clemence, "but how do you know Mi San will go to England? It is a dickens of a way from all her people."

"Oh, of course she will," said Mrs. Clemence, carelessly, "all the Chinese think it a very swell thing to have been to England."

"Well, take her if you like," said her husband, "but I warn you the Chinese sometimes turn very nasty when they find they are really away from their own country, and with only 'barbarians'—as they call us—about them."

Mrs. Clemence sounded Mi San about going and was surprised to find she had no enthusiasm on the matter at all—it was only after counting up on a Chinese counting-board, the number of dollars she would have collected together by her return, that she said she would go, and then it was in a depressed and doubtful manner. She took To-to for her walk that afternoon along to the Bubbling Well, near where there were seats under shady trees, and where the nurses of the neighbourhood met their friends.

Mi San's friend was the English baker's young man, who delivered the loaves every morning in a neat little hand-cart, painted red. Him, she was going to marry, when their united savings allowed of it. His name was Ann Ling, and he was a very good specimen of the stalwart Chinese of the Yang-tse-Kiang. To him Mi San confided her fears at going away across the wide seas.

"Fool that thou art," said Ann Ling, who was not polite. "Why fear? This England of the barbarians is only like the Rock of Hong Kong, but further off. 'Tis because their own land is so poor and small that they come to China. There is nought to fear, we are of a better race."

"It is not thus, however, that they speak," said Mi San, unbelievingly. "Often will the men tell to To-to of the beautiful land across the sea, and say this is a miserable country."

"Why, then, are they so desirous of living in it?" said Ann Ling, with some reason. "First they take one bit, and then another; I tell thee, Mi San, never were their eyes gladdened by so fair a land before. In all ways do they seek to please the Emperor. Myself have I seen a stone in the country beyond Tientsin, on which it is graven, that in the year of the Great Famine, the barbarians paid many lacs of tribute, long owing. Wherefore should they do this? Theirs is but a poor country, and it seeks a small piece of the Heavenly Empire. Be not afraid to venture forth, take of their dollars as many as can be got, and bring them back to the Flowery Land."

Mi San was much strengthened by this grand language; still she did not like going, but it was her duty to obey the counsels of her future husband, so that evening she told her mistress again that she was willing to go.

"This will save us ever so much bother, Henry," Mrs. Clemence said joyfully; "the children are so accustomed to her, and she is really very useful to me, myself."

"That's all right," said her husband, who was thinking much more of the sale of his horses and letting of his house, than of nurses and babies.

So it was all arranged, and soon the day came, when the big Messageries Steamer was waiting down at the mouth of the Yang tse Kiang, and the launch that goes up and down the twenty miles of the river to Shanghai, was to start from the quay. It was the weekly excitement, seeing all the lucky ones off, giving them flowers, and fruit, and cakes, and packets of tea for the voyage.

All the travellers were very joyful, even To-to, who appreciated highly the bustle and fuss; only Mi San was very sad, as she went on board the launch all alone. Her relatives lived in a farm-house ten miles away, and Ann Ling could not leave his work in the middle of the day to say farewell. True, last night he had presented her with a beautiful bun, on which her name was marked in currants. The launch puffed away from the quay. the whistle blew, and the crowd on the wooden platform waved excited farewells. Then the travellers threaded their way carefully through the many ships moored in the river, past two Russian gun-boats, two British cruisers, a German man-of-war, and loads of small schooners and trading vessels.

But Mi San's eyes were blinded with tears; she saw nothing of the bright June sunshine, She sat huddled up in a corner, of the saloon and paid no attention to To-to's talking. Mrs. Clemence did not see her, she was outside on the deck of the launch, with her husband and the baby, and much too full of her own concerns to care for Mi San's feelings. The stone farm-houses peeped out of the fruit-trees all along the river, and queer little houses, with the corners of the roofs turned up, stood on the edge of green rice-fields—the country all down the sides of the lower part of the Yang-tse Kiang is very well cultivated. It took them about four hours to go down the river, and then alongside the great mail steamer. The Chinese forts at the mouth of the estuary looked strong and solid.

"How easily they could blow us up," said Mrs. Clemence to the Captain, who was French, and did not quite understand her.

The ship had started from Yokohama and was pretty full, but Mr. Clemence had taken their berths some time before, and had secured two good cabins, one for himself and his wife, and another for the amah and the babies, with a skylight opening on to the deck, where the Chinese passengers spent their days. A strong smell of stale fish and opium and Chinese cooking came down this, but Mi San liked it, and thereby felt her spirits revive.

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"There are many, very many Chinamen on this ship," she said to herself: "it is not only I, alone, who sail away from my dear homeland."

At the children's meals there were two other amahs one a fat and solid old creature, who said nothing, going only as far as Hong Kong, and the other a person about Mi San's own age. Chinese food was given them for their meals. Mi San had never seen a big ship before, but she showed no surprise at anything; she was contented enough, she sat on deck most of the day playing with To-to, and nursing the baby, and Mrs. Clemence congratulated herself often on having brought her with them. Down the coast on the right hand, was the rugged shore of China—bare grey rocks that made the foam of the waves fly as they struck against them. The sea was rather rough, as it usually is in the Chinese waters, but the ship was a large one, and the motion was not too unpleasant. In about two days and a half they sighted Hong Kong, and steamed into the harbour under the shadow of the Peak. It was tremendously hot here, in June, with the open sea-breezes shut off by the cliffs. A lot of the Chinese passengers got off, but still a lot more came on for Singapore. Mi San, looking over the side, rejoiced, because she thought they were coming to England; at supper she said so to the other amah.

"Oh no," her friend answered, "they get off, as I do, at Singapore. No true Chinaman goes further than Singapore this way, save only a few merchants and ricksha men to Colombo. Then, for months after, you will see no Chinese—no face save only the round eyes and red hair of the barbarians."

This she said out of malice, for she was jealous of Mi San's chance of going to Europe. Mi San went away silently; something seemed to rise up within her and say—"Only once do you live, O Chinese maiden! What good do your dollars do, when you are perchance killed and eaten by these barbarians—when the rocks in China are left far away and you go to the dark Island in the sea?"

Her friend missed no opportunity of impressing on her mind the true wretchedness of England.

"Even tea will not grow there," she said; "the English have their tea from China, miserable red-headed devils that they are! The ones you see in China are improved by the light of that favoured land; in their own country they are savages. You may count on your ten fingers the women of China who have been there and lived to return."

So a great terror grew up in Mi San's heart, and increased daily till they reached Singapore. In the early morning they steamed slowly into the harbour, with the great forts towering down. Past the red and green islands dotted about the Straits, where the red earth is as red as in Devonshire, and where the continual daily showers make the most luxuriant vegetation in the world. Here Mi San summoned up courage to tell her mistress she must return to China, she could go no further away.

Mrs. Clemence was very angry, indeed. She had found the use of Mi San on board ship, and knew the difficulty she would have in getting a suitable person at a day's notice.

"It is impossible, quite impossible," she said. "I will not let you go—if you go off this ship I will tell the policeman to take you, and I will give you no money to take you back to China."

Mi San cried, and implored her to let her go back, but she was too timid to go off the ship without leave, and in the evening the ship sailed again, like a great inexorable Fate that carried her away, whether she wished it or not. A sullen gloom fell on Mi San; nearly all the Chinese had left the ship—her friend, the other amah, had spoken truth; no doubt, in all other things also she had spoken truth, and never would Mi San see the flowery land again.

She was silent and miserable, but she did her work, and To-to toddled by her happily, wherever she went. They went up the Straits of Malacca, and stopped at Penang. Mi San looked at the Malays in the boats, that crowded round the mail steamer, with disgust, these men were not Chinamen; a few Chinese here and there could be still seen, but they were much fewer in number than at Singapore.

"Soon I shall see them no more," Mi San said to herself, "we are already many days from China."

A growing hate to Mrs. Clemence filled her heart—she watched her mistress talk and amuse herself on deck, and for every light word, she hated her the more.

It had been a very hot day. The last point of Sumatra was fading away on the horizon, dinner was over, and all the passengers were lying about in long chairs on deck; some playing whist or piquet, and some too lazy to do anything at all. Only the soft rush of the great steamer through the water was to be heard. Suddenly, a faint splash was heard—then another—but they were not loud enough to be noticed, had not a sailor called out "Child overboard!"

All was changed in a minute. The cry was caught up from one to the other, whistles were sounded and bells rang—not least, the heart of every mother on board stood still with fear. Mrs. Clemence seized her husband's arm.

"Henry, the amah," she whispered, a dreadful prevision of what had happened seizing her heart.

"I will go down and find the babies at once," he said, "don't anticipate evil, dear."

But she came with him, and together they hurried below. She went straight to the children's cabin, where only an hour before she had seen the two sleeping, so securely. Now, there was no one there!

Mr. Clemence rushed out again, calling Mi San—there was no answer; his wife stood in the cabin, stunned, unable to think, almost unable to feel. By degrees, the other women, whose children were safe, gathered round and tried to rouse her to action. One of them, a Mrs. Findlay, turned over everything in the cabin, in the vain hope of finding some clue to the tragedy. Under the mattress of the upper berth, nearly dead, she found the baby. To lift him out was the work of a minute—a few seconds more, and the poor little creature would have been beyond all help, for the amah had evidently done her best to suffocate him.

Of To-to there was no sign, and the dreadful fact soon dawned on everybody that the amah had first thrown the child out of the port-hole in the passage, and then jumped into the sea herself. The square opening of the nearest port-hole had been lifted, and the wide open space was large enough to easily let pass the slim figure of the amah. The ship was stopped, and for two hours boats were out searching for the bodies, but the quest was hopeless from the first. There is a very strong tide in the Bay of Bengal, that sets to the south, and on the dark waste of waters, the two bodies—the murderess and her victim—may have been carried miles in a very short space of time.

So, in the middle of that miserable night, the ship went on, carrying with it the mother, who vainly longed to share her child's fate herself.

SADI GRANT.

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NANINE.

"Oh! what shall I do? What shall I do? What shall I do?" This was her tragic voice; Nanine could not help it. It was part of her nature, even when quite alone to use her stage tricks.

She threw herself on the sofa in the most affecting attitude, and looked volumes in the fire. She had a way of looking; she would say "good-bye," to a friend, and look as if to say: "I love you. Oh! how I love you! When shall we meet again in this sad world? Perhaps never!" In all probability her thoughts were: "Oh what a duck of a hat! It would suit me better than you too; I wonder where you bought it."

Now, however, her flippant little soul was stirred. There was a sickly smell of flowers which annoyed her. She went over to the table, and taking a huge bouquet of lilies—trophies of last night's success—threw them in the fire.

"Faded!" she shuddered. "They were fresh last night. The heated atmosphere of the theatre makes them die quicker. The atmosphere is stifling!" She clutched at her collar as if she felt the sensation then. "Am I faded?" She walked over to the long mirror. "Am I faded?"

The mirror showed her a slim, fragile figure, with a pale oval face, surrounded by quantities of brown, wavy hair, and the eyes that looked back at her—well, every leading paper had written many a paragraph about them. Nanine was the star actress—Nanine was the rage. Every little amateur actress aspired to be a Nanine, and was so, too, in the eyes of her fond relatives. "Nanine brown" was the colour of the day, for hair and everything else.

"Yes, I look pale; two fainting fits to-day—I must take care, Harold said so. He's always looking after my health, but then he lives so near, and well—if he only had a practice! If it were not for Lord Borrodaile, if Harold were not so——"

Nanine marry a penniless student! Nanine, who could pick and choose among the peers of the realm; who could be "my Lady," ten times a day if she chose!

A bell sounded; she threw herself on the sofa in her most becoming style, when "Lord Borrodaile" was announced. She just gave him time to get the full effect of her pose, to see how delightful she looked in the fire-light. Then, with a well-bred little start, she rose and welcomed him. "How nice of you to come! Sit down." She waved to a seat.

Lord Borrodaile was enchanted. It was the same voice and the same look she used with her lover in Act IV. of the new play. She pressed a bell; he expected a fairy to appear, but a very ordinary parlourmaid came instead. "Tea, Martin."

Tea was over. Lord Borrodaile was fidgety! Nanine wished he would go. Yes! he was titled, rich, handsome, but he bored her, and she wished he would go. He had never called in this *tête-à-tête* way before. It was a distinct failure. It came at last with a gasp.

"Nanine, I love you! You must know I love you."

He had studied this speech, he had seen similar ones in novels, he had noticed in her love scenes that this was the usual style of the lover. There was something missing in his tone. Nanine with her quick instincts knew it. It felt like rehearsal. Lord Borrodaile watched her.

"Nanine, may I call you Nanine?"

She smiled. "May I call you Nanine?" Why, the call boys and scene-shifters said it among themselves; the walking gentleman said it to her face.

"See, I do not hurry you; I dare not suggest as yet a ring." He caught her by the hand. "But this for the moment, answer me to-morrow night." He slipped a heavy gold chain on her wrist, kissed her and was gone.

She shuddered. It was cold that chain and heavy. A chain, too, with a padlock; where was the key? She tried violently to take it off, it was too tight. "He has the key." She gave a hollow little laugh, "I wear the chain, how cold it is!"

"Victorious!" Borrodaile hugged himself with delight. She had not promised to marry him, but she would, of course. Why, hundreds of mammas were angling for him all over London, suburbs and country—Borrodaile of Borrodaile Towers, with ancestors dating back centuries. Nanine! why no one even knew her parentage. True, she was beautiful; beauty fades; he had never looked upon it in that light when contemplating his own good looks, though. Only an actress! actresses were the fashion. Fashions change and she was clever enough to know it.

At his club they had guessed Borrodaile's little game and betted high stakes, too, that he would not win. "Nanine will surprise us all some day—disappear with a penniless boy—these southern natures are always impulsive, romantic, don't you know."

Borrodaile had devised a plan; he would win, and they should know of his victory, and had trotted down to his club full of it the day before. "See this?" he held up the massive gold chain. "Look well at it, stake your last sou, Nanine will wear this to-morrow night. Go down to the theatre, look, if it is so, know I am accepted."

It was agreed. Borrodaile booked the stage box. The more he thought of it the more delighted he felt. It

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had been a grand idea, he knew well the size of her slender little wrist. On opening the chain it would go on easily; closed, it was far too tight to pass over the hand. It had been made on purpose with a tiny padlock and key—nothing else would open it. To a lady with her lady's maid always within reach this would be no inconvenience. That he had kept the key was of course an accident. The mechanism he had not explained to his friend; all is fair in love and war. A scrap of conscience left over perhaps from his youth made him feel rather mean.

* * * * *

An Italian organ woman was playing one of the latest tunes outside the stage door of the theatre. Nanine, emerging from her carriage, directed her maid to give her some money. She was always good to the poor. Italians appealed to her, for was not she born on Italy's sunny shores! The woman watched her till she was quite out of sight. She was olive-complexioned, with marvellous eyes, almost as fascinating as Nanine's. She counted her gains, and evidently well-satisfied pushed the organ up a side street, and leaving it in the charge of an acquaintance, made her way to the gallery door and patiently waited to be admitted.

In her dressing-room Nanine rested. She looked beautiful in her white satin and diamonds, but beneath the rouge there was a distinct pallor. Elise detected it.

"Mademoiselle, take a glass of champagne."

"No, thanks."

"Mademoiselle will faint; two faints to-day already. You worry over this chain. Monsieur—hem! Mademoiselle. Mademoiselle's friend will give her the key—one turn it will be open."

Mademoiselle did not hear, she was deep in thought.

"If he will marry me in spite of all, I will accept him; yes, I will tell him all, and then——"

"Overture. Ov-er-ture, please."

Nanine mused on.

"Overture, ladies, please. Beginners for the first act. Be-gin-ners, please."

Oh! how that call-boy worries! She started up.

There was a polite knock at the door.

"They are ready for you, Mademoiselle Nanine."

It was the stage-manager's voice.

"Mademoiselle!" Elise ran forward with the smelling salts. Nanine was nearly off again. "Mademoiselle Nanine, they are gagging."

"Let them gag."

She pulled herself together and swept out of the room. The orchestra struck up.

She always entered to music in this play. It was one of her small weaknesses, and the author had arranged it to oblige her.

A loud burst of applause greeted the entrance of Nanine.

The woman in the first row of the gallery became excited. In her excitement she stood up and that created a disturbance. She was blind and deaf to all save Nanine, who, on her entrance, carrying masses of costly white flowers, looked radiant. The woman flung something over the rail. "Sit down, will yer." She was roughly forced back in her place. "What are yer thinking of? Flowers? Who wants your flowers? Lidies don't throw things at gentlemen's bald heads a-sitting in the stalls. If yer wants to send them, give 'em to them music chaps. They'll hand 'em up, or behind the scenes" (with a loud laugh) "if yer that intimate."

Her flowers were useless; they had struck an elderly gentleman at the back of the stalls. He had momentarily started, then fixed his attention on the play once more. And the tiny bunch of Neapolitan violets, to which a note was attached, had fallen unheeded. It was a touching play. Between Acts I. and II. there was a wait, in which handkerchiefs were in vogue.

The Italian woman closed her eyes, the tears slowly welled down her cheeks. It was not of the play she was thinking, but of the past. Scene after scene returned. It was cold; with aching arms she was turning her organ; at her side was a child, a little dark child singing and dancing. A gentleman came up, talked, and gave her some coppers. He seemed interested in the child, inquired where they lived, and called. Then all was arranged. He would take the child, have her trained. She would be famous. There was only one condition—the mother must keep out of the way. He would pay her return passage to Italy if she liked. Out of the way she must go. To see her would interrupt the child's education—would ruin her career. To ruin her career, well, if that was her intention, she could keep the child. It had been a struggle.

The big drum of the orchestra disturbed the reverie of Nanine's mother. The curtain went up. Nanine was discovered surrounded by flowers. How ethereal she looked, again in white, this time soft white draperies, no jewellery save a heavy gold chain which gleamed on her white arm. She was softly singing to herself. Suddenly there was a catch in her voice. Consternation, great consternation! Nanine had fallen forward. The woman in the gallery rushed from her seat. Resistance was fruitless, in a moment she had gone.

* * * * *

On the green room couch lay Nanine; on one side stood Lord Borrodaile, Harold Methuen on the other, Elise bending over her with smelling salts; at the foot, much perturbed, was the stage-manager.

The door opened suddenly; in rushed the Italian woman. There was a start of surprise. Only Nanine, slowly opening her eyes, exclaimed, "My mother." They made way for her.

Lord Borrodaile looked at the stage-manager; the stage-manager looked down, but no contradiction was written on his face. My lord gave a low whistle, and departed.

"I must be off," said the manager. "Any medical aid required?"

"Only what I can give," answered Methuen.

The play continued; the understudy had reached her goal. Nanine was again unconscious.

"Don't move her, Elise," said Methuen, "put her things together; by the time the carriage comes she can be moved."

Elise withdrew. The patient roused. "Flowers all faded. The chain! take it; I don't want the chain. It's cold, it's heavy." She opened her eyes. There bending over her stood her mother and Harold Methuen, hand in hand.

She raised herself. "The cue, prompter; quick, the cue."

Harold bent over her. "I love you, I love you."

She rubbed her eyes. "Yes, cue, love."

"I love you with all my heart."

"Curtain, quick, curtain."

"No, dearest, this is the beginning of the act."

She looked from him to her mother in a dazed way, and then recognition came.

"Not acting, it's real all real. Oh, I am happy now."

Queenie Sichel.

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Hunted by Baboons.

A Story of the Wheel in South Africa.

I.

WELDON and May came down to the breakfast room of the little hotel at almost the same moment, and together revelled in the cool fragrance of the early morning.

"I vote we start at once," said Weldon, "In this bracing air we should make Cape Town easily by lunch time."

"I don't know about that," May, who knew the land, answered. "It's not more than forty miles, but you know, as we near the bay, the roads are pretty rough travelling—any amount of hills, and our South African roads are not laid out, like those in old England, to tempt wheelmen. We'll be doing well if we get in in time for a bath before supper."

"Whew! You must expect to walk half the way?"

"That's about it," said May, "but never mind, it's the finest scenery in the world."

"H'm, that's rather a tall order. I suppose, now, you couldn't scare up a lion or something to make the scene more interesting. This is my last day's ride, you know, and, really, you ought to dig out something sensational, something South African."

"Far too far south for lions or big game, old man," said the Afrikander. "We may sight a deer or so, but I can promise nothing more hair raising, unless you care for baboons. There are a few bands of them between us and Cape Town, I believe."

"Monkeys? 'Pshaw!" said Weldon, "they're beneath notice. I did hope to meet a lion in the path. Ah! breakfast."

The young Afrikander and his visitor, an old chum from home, were quickly out after a good meal to overhaul, like experienced riders, their bicycles before starting on their last day's ride before the latter's return to England. May frowned when he discovered a big Kaffir busily cleaning his wheel, without orders. A Kaffir is not usually skilled in cycles, and more apt to mar than mend when he ignorantly meddles with them. May pushed him aside roughly, and the next instant, as the Kaffir faced him, made a dash for him.

"Hold him, Weldon," he cried, and at the shout there came running the Dutch landlady and other black servants from the roadside inn. The Kaffir, however, was slippery as a snake, twisted out of May's hands and dashed into the woods about the hotel like a fox.

"What was the matter?" cried the surprised spectators.

"The rascal!" cried May. "That fellow worked in my father's store in Cape Town, and is wanted for theft. I don't suppose he will come back, but, if he does, there's a reward offered for him at police headquarters. What was he doing with the bicycles?"

"He clean for baas," a servant volunteered, but May and Weldon examined their machines with some anxiety. It is not a good thing to have one's wheel cleaned by rascals, when a long lonely ride on a rough little-travelled road is in front. But the young men could find nothing wrong.

"He had no time," said the landlady reassuringly. "He only knew this morning the baas were here, and asked me which way the baas were going. He went to the baas' wheels to clean them, but I sent him to his own work, and that was only ten minutes ago. So the rascal had no time to hurt them."

"Oh! He knew I was here, did he?" May asked. "Did he see us last night?"

"When the baas paid the bill before going to breakfast this morning."

"There's something funny about that," said May to Weldon, as they rode away together in the glorious morning. "If the beggar saw me he must have recognised me, and one would think would keep out of my road. His was a daring robbery with assault on the watchman, and I'd certainly hand him over to the police if I caught him. Fancy his impudence! Starting to clean my bicycle."

"To tamper with it," said Weldon. "That was his game, I expect—perhaps to be revenged on you, but more likely——"

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Pastimes.
1d. WEEKLY.

"What?"

"Well, you say it is a lonely rough road. Perhaps your Kaffir would have liked us to walk when our machines broke down, especially as he saw you pay the bill, and knew you had money on you."

"I didn't think of that," said May. "However, no harm is done—he didn't have time."

They sped away, their knapsacks on their backs, at a good pace across a lovely country, and, in the bright morning air of that wonderful climate, soon forgot all about the Kaffir thief. For a while, after leaving the inn, the road ran smoothly and on a fairly level grade round the broad shoulder of a mountain.

"Fairly good road," said May, "but it makes our way much longer. Across the mountain would shorten it by two-thirds."

"The usual path for foot passengers I suppose, but rather impossible for wheelmen," said the other. "Now we're coming to a bad piece."

* * * * *

As one approaches Table Bay from the inland, great mountains guard the water. Through these are numerous passes, called "Kloofs," and, while the scenery along them is of the grandest, they are hard roads for cyclists to tackle.

The riders were now well into the hills, and the Englishman found to his disgust, that he had to spend as much time pushing his bicycle as in the saddle. The sun, also, was now noon-high, and the friends grew silent, mopping their brows, as they climbed the winding roads of the Kloof.

At one of these ascents, May dragged a long way behind, and Weldon reached the top far in advance of his chum. He sat down to rest and enjoy the shade of a tree, and as he threw himself on his back, he glanced at the surrounding country.

It was a comparatively bare spot he was on. The woods ceased for a space, and a stretch of moorland spread broadly out. This was dotted with big black and grey fungus-speckled boulders, and seemed a dreary waste.

Weldon cast his eyes over it before he lay down, lighting his pipe, and saw no manner of living thing.

A minute afterwards he raised his head, and the pipe almost fell from his mouth with surprise.

Sixty yards away, on a big rock, sat a queer-looking man gravely observing the stranger, and remaining absolutely still. Weldon looked from his right where the queer figure had so suddenly appeared to his left, and there also on another rock sat another strange looking man, as grave, as silent, as motionless, observing him.

Weldon looked from one to the other, and his glance surveyed the open space at the back of, and between, these apparent sentinels.

On a large flat-topped rock sat in a silent row, about a dozen similar figures, all very grave, all very observant, the steady gaze of every one of them concentrated on the bicyclist. Weldon was a little short sighted, and he rose to his feet, putting on his eyeglasses to study these strange people more minutely.

"They don't look like the natives—either Hottentot or Kaffirs. Surely they can't be the dwarf Bushmen."

Then his glasses dropped and he threw back his head with a loud laugh.

"Baboons!" he cried. "The ugly rascals—that's certainly one against me!"

At that shout, the little conclave on the rocks was greatly startled and there at once commenced among them such an indignant chattering as might have been in a decorous meeting of church elders, disturbed by a rude intrusion. The sentinels scampered from their posts to join in the general discussion, and many of the almost human monkeys began to grimace at Weldon angrily, and shake their paws threateningly.

But this made him only laugh more loudly. Their jabbering rage seemed so futile and ridiculous. A cheeky little member of the band suddenly ran out in advance of the rest, and with a gamin-like expression of contempt and anger picked a stone from the ground and threw it at the wheelman.

The rock in the hands of a stouter and older baboon might have hit Weldon, but the cheeky little ape's arms were not yet muscular enough. The missile fell short. Still the accuracy of the throw delighted the Englishman, who had never thought that monkeys of any species could attack in this way. He cried out, laughing:

"Good for you, you young scamp, but you must do better if you want to learn to play cricket. Like this, you know."

Lost in enjoyment of this unexpected fun with the baboons, he did not notice that May had come up the hill, and was now looking on with suprise.

Weldon stooped to pick up a fair sized pebble, and, before May could jump forward, crying out "Don't!" the Englishman had hopped a moment on one foot, and let fly the stone with skilful arm.

It was, in its results, too well thrown by far. It caught the unfortunate monkey, who had thrown the rock, fairly in the neck, and he toppled over like a ninepin, and lay quite still.

Weldon was astonished and remorseful at the success of his throw; the little prone figure looked so human and helpless.

He turned to May with a laugh, but was surprised to see his friend leap for his bicycle, and to hear him call out:

"Come on; you've done it now; let's get out of this!"

"What's the matter?"

"Come on! Don't you know a band of baboons are fearless when together and angry? They have been known to drive away a lion, and we haven't even a revolver between us. Come on! See, they're after us!"

Weldon looked at the group which he had found so grave and silent.

Now they were wildly chattering, crying out, and lamenting over the senseless body of their young comrade.

Suddenly, they formed together, and, with a series of great bounds and running, now on all four paws, now on two, they charged on the two friends.

Rather frightened at the consequence of teaching a baboon how to throw, Weldon jumped on his bicycle, and, just as he did so, the baboons resorted to their

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favourite weapon, and, seizing here and there rocks of large size, they discharged a volley of them after the fugitives.

The stones fell all about the riders; one struck May's front wheel and almost capsized him, but they themselves were unhurt.

The road now wound down a hill, which was too rough and steep for more than cautious riders, but, urged forward by the cries of the baboons and the continued stone-throwing, the friends dashed down it at full speed.

"The brutes are following," yelled Weldon, as a rock grazed his head, and, looking back, May saw that, with incredible swiftness, the pack were bounding behind, never ceasing their revengeful cries, and their artillery fire of stones.

But the cyclists gained.

The road turned sharply and shut them from the view of the monkeys, and then they came to the foot, and, to their disgust, saw yet another steep hill rise in front.

Still the yelps of the baboons sounded in the rear.

"Put your back into it, old man!" yelled May, and the two young men rushed down the last few yards of hill with such speed that the velocity gained carried them up the ascent.

Stooping low they worked the pedals with all their might, but half way up the wheels began to wiggle-waggle, and they had to jump off.

"Push on!" cried Weldon, shoving his machine ahead.

They were still, however, far from the top when the raging and vindictive baboons came chattering to the foot of the hill, and uttered a sort of triumphant screech as they sighted the enemy.

The brutes bounded up the hill in pursuit, with great cunning seeking a shelter from retaliation in the trees and bushes of the roadside.

By leaps and bounds they gained and soon the stone-throwing recommenced, and now both men were struck more than once, blood flowing from a cut in Weldon's head.

"The demons!" he gasped. "They're more like savage men than brute beasts!"

"I wish you'd realised that before you disturbed them," his reproachful comrade grunted.

At last they were at the top, and a declivity again stretched before them, just as the stones came down in a shower. The vengeful apes seemed to have no idea of relinquishing the chase. The riders sped down at break-neck speed, and now they thought they were fairly and safely away. The road twisted and wound. Before long they were out of sight, and soon after the yelps of the pack sounded more faintly.

"Thank Heaven!" cried May, who was a little in advance. "That was a tight hole."

"I'll know better another time than to meddle with a pack of these monkeys!" Weldon gasped. "Halloa!"

They were turning a corner at full speed, the danger behind rendering them blind to any in front. As Weldon cried out, May ran up against an obstruction, and was pitched far over the handlebars, a good ten feet, into some bushes by the wayside.

There was no possibility for his friend to escape; he was scorching directly behind, and the descent was steep.

He struck the obstruction and his chum's bicycle together, and, like an arrow sped after another, he also shot through the air and lighted behind May. There, hidden by the bushes, they lay still and senseless.

Immediately, from the other side of the road, where the wood was dense, a brutal black face, with wide yellowish eyeballs peeped out, listened for a moment, then leaped to the two lifeless men, and began to rifle their pockets.

It was the same Kaffir who, in the morning, had been almost caught by May—the man who was wanted in Capetown for assault and robbery. Excited by the sight of the gold which May had shown when settling the hotel bill, disappointed in tampering with the wheels, he had been in time to tie a grape vine taut across the path, with almost fatal results to the white men whose bicycles lay smashed in the road.

The Kaffir rogue lost no time in searching his late master's pockets, but he had hardly begun to do so when he was arrested in the act by a strange tumult up the hill. Fearful of capture he left his prey, and ran across the road to his former hiding-place.

He was not half way across when a huge old grey baboon, far in advance of the others, bounded round the bend, a big rock in its forepaw. It saw the Kaffir and, with a scream of fury, discharged the missile.

The stone struck squarely between the robber's eyes, and he sank to his knees, stupefied with terror and blinded with blood. In an instant the pack came up, yelping, and immediately they set upon the unhappy wretch, stoning him until he was a shapeless heap—quite dead.

They sniffed about him for a while, apparently seeing no difference between him and the one who had thoughtlessly killed their small companion, and at last, chattering triumphantly, they went back, satisfied with their revenge.

When the two wheelmen at length came to their senses, the lonely road was very quiet and still. They soon learnt what a swift and dreadful punishment had befallen the robbing Kaffir, whose stone-surrounded black body, battered almost beyond recognition, lay by the side of the grape vine, witness of the man's attempt to kill and steal.

The bicycles were useless, so they had a long silent walk to the nearest station of the mounted police, where they told of their escape from the baboon pack, and still stranger escape from robbery and murder.

P. Y. BLACK.

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OLD PHILLINGHAM'S DAUGHTER.

WHEN poor old Phillingham pegged out there was a general feeling amongst us that something ought to be done for his daughter. Masters suggested that she should be "finished" at a boarding-school, but the bare idea of Roma going through the mill of a polite education roused our ire.

"Why you'd break her spirit, spoil her temper, and ruin her figure," cried Bob Owen, "Roma's not the girl to endure intellectual, any more than physical stays let me tell you."

Masters agreed with a whimisical shrug, and tentatively put forward proposition number two.

"Was there any profession or calling for which she could be trained. She has a splendid voice, and a face like hers would make a fortune on the stage."

"I don't like the idea of old Phil's girl becoming an actress," said Owen.

"Has she any artistic taste? You've seen more of her of late years than I."

"Oh, as for taste, she wouldn't be her father's daughter without it, but I don't know that her talent lies in any special direction. I don't think she'd make a successful painter, for one might as well expect a blackbird to pipe to order, as for Roma to conform to rule."

"But, my dear Owen, she'll have to do something."

"Exactly, but the question is, what will she do?"

There was a long pause. Masters looked sarcastic, Owen frowned, and the rest of us gave vent to our feelings by wishing ardently that Phillingham had deferred his decease for a year or two at least.

"Best speak to the girl herself," said Sketchley at last. "Roma has plenty of sense in that pretty head of hers, and she'll make up her mind in next to no time."

"If it's me you're talking of," interrupted a sweet voice with a touch of the brogue, "I've made it up already, and thank you kindly."

"My dear child, how did you come here?" asked Owen anxiously. It was raining cats and dogs, and of all nights the most unfit for a girl to be out.

"Walked," said Roma laconically, stretching out a slender foot, shod, as we mournfully observed, in the oldest and most shapeless of shoes.

"I'm wet," she added, slipping off her cloak. "I want a good warm, a comfortable chair and a cigarette."

"But Roma—" commenced Owen reprovingly.

She checked him with a sudden movement, clasping her hands on his arm, with a pleading expression on her sweet upturned face, curiously childlike in the firelight's glow.

"I know what you are going to say, Bob, and in the words of Punch, take my advice and 'don't.' You surely wouldn't have me stay all by myself, and eat my heart out in the darkness. I always went everywhere with Dad," with a little catch in her voice, "rain or snow, it never stopped me. Why should it now?"

After that there was nothing more to be said. Bob settled her in his favourite chair, Masters packed her up with cushions, and Sketchley, with the gravest air possible, handed her a cigarette.

"And now," she said after a bit, "suppose you all go on where you left off. I believe you were talking about me?"

"Quite right, my child," said Sketchley, "we were just discussing your future."

"Come to any conclusion?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, we decided to refer the question to you."

"So I should think," laughed the girl. "At seventeen if ever, one should have views of one's own."

"Are you only seventeen, Roma?"

"Why, Bob, you ought to know. Haven't you taken me out every birthday ever since I could remember?"

Bob said nothing but I noticed a queer expression in his eyes as he bent to make up the fire, which set me thinking.

"But I am getting away from my subject," continued she. "So far as I can understand, you are all wondering what is to become of me, now—now that I'm left alone."

"We thought, Roma," broke in Masters eagerly, "that if you would choose a profession or calling—painting—singing—anything you prefer, you couldn't do better than study at it for the next two or three years."

The girl nodded—"And I suppose you meant to send the hat round for the exes, didn't you?"

"Well, my child," said Bob, "and surely we have a right to look after our old friend's daughter."

"I'll never dispute that," she answered in a low tone, "only," raising her head with a bright smile, "I'll have to be looked after in my own fashion."

Masters groaned.

"What mad nonsense are you after now?" he asked testily.

Roma glanced at us all under her lowered eyelids, then taking the cigarette from her lips, she answered from a cloud of smoke:—

"I'm going to be a model."

"The deuce you are," said Masters. "I won't consent to any such preposterous nonsense. What do you say, Owen?"

But Roma smiled in a sort of confident fashion, as Bob prepared to answer.

"You won't go against me, will you?" she asked.

"I can't give an opinion yet," he replied gravely, "it is not at all what I was prepared for."

The girl flushed, and a mutinous glance crept into her eyes.

"I didn't think *men* were so mean-minded," she said, the scornful emphasis bearing witness that women in her estimation were on a decidedly lower plane than the lords of creation. "Here, I have sat to all of you ever since Bob painted me a wee mite of three years old. Why," she added proudly, "I don't believe that anyone of you have sent out a figure painting for years, that did not owe its eyes, hair, hands or feet to me. Is it true or not?"

Somewhat abashed we were constrained to admit it was.

"Exactly," she replied, "and yet now when I propose to adopt as a profession what as hitherto only been a pastime you all looked shocked and groan. I don't suppose you'll treat me any differently when you pay me for my services than when you had them gratis."

"Well," said Masters slowly, "if you'll undertake to limit your connection to your father's friends, it might perhaps be managed."

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"Not a bit of it," laughed Roma, "my father's friends shall always have first call on me, but it's impossible to suppose that they could find sufficient work to keep me genuinely employed all the year round."

"In that case, Roma," said Masters gravely, "you will practically place yourself on a level with a professional model?"

"Well, why not?"

It was difficult to explain exactly why. The girl was so utterly fearless, so innocently unconventional, that it seemed impossible to tell her that by adopting such a calling she would in the eyes of Mrs. Grundy at all event lose caste.

"As to terms," continued the girl composedly, "I shall accept neither a penny more nor less than the usual rates for a first class sitter. Half a guinea a day."

"Come," she added, as none of us broke the silence, "don't be cross. Can't you see how impossible it would be to let you, any of you, pay for me for the next two or three years? Charity, even when bestowed most lovingly, is still charity, and I will have none of it."

"But, my dear, where will you live. Who will look after you?"

"I shall keep on a room in our old lodgings where as you know, the landlady has always been most kind."

"If it's me you're talking of," interrupted a sweet voice, with a touch of the brogue, "I've made it up already, and thank you kindly."

"Well, if you must, Roma, I suppose we can't stop you."

But that didn't suit Miss Wilfulness at all. Having achieved her point, she now set about to win our approval, and so well did she succeed, that the younger half of us, at any rate, were convinced of the propriety of her plan before the evening was over.

Mis Roma was at length in a high state of delight. How charming she looked with her wonderful red gold hair, dark eyes, and lips scarlet as the poppy in the corn. After a while she sang to us some wild gipsy melody, that she had caught up from a Polish fellow who used to hang about the studio.

At last Bob insisted it was time for her to go, and, pout as she might, he carried her off. I can see her now as she stood at the door, the cloak half falling from her shapely shoulders, a cigarette waved defiantly towards us. repartees, and jests upon her lips until the last.

"What a beautiful child it is," said Masters with a sigh. "And what a lot of suffering she's got before her."

"What an idea, pain and Roma can never go together. She's as lighthearted as a bit of thistledown."

"So says youth, with its crude experiences, and immature judgments. She's but a child now, and before she passes into womanhood, she'll have to love, and unless I'm much mistaken she'll take it very hardly."

Afterwards Masters' words came back to me with a curious pang.

* * * *

Somehow or other things settled themselves very much as Roma wished. We tried to limit her connection as much as possible to those who had known her father, and were, therefore, acquainted with the circumstances of the case, and succeeded fairly well in so doing. Sketchley constituted himself a sort of chaperone in Bob's absence, and used to turn up most days to fetch her home from any of the studios where she might be engaged. Bob, by-the-bye, had gone off on a sketching tour to the south of France, whither he proposed to return the following spring.

I rather think Roma missed him more than we suspected. She had always looked upon old Bob as a sort of second father, though when you came to think of it, he was not so fatherly—as to years—after all. He was only thirty-eight, but somehow or other, his grave ways, and quiet, self-contained manner made him appear a regular middle-aged sort of buffer—who had left his youth far behind him.

As to his pictures, they were just the very sort that you would not expect a man like Bob to produce. Insensibly one presupposed him a painter of half lights, peaceful landscapes, placid cows moonily munching in a field of daisies. It was nothing less than marvellous that his conceptions should be so vividly dramatic, his colouring so daring, his technique so unconventional.

Bob had been gone about three months when Roma told us that Philip Tremaine, the well-known R. A., had asked her to let him have some sittings.

"It's a great compliment, isn't it?" she said. "You know he wouldn't paint anybody whose face is just the least bit out of drawing. How thankful I ought to be that my nose runs straight to

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Bob had gone off on a sketching tour to the South of France.

the end of the chapter, instead of flying off at a tangent in 'mid-air,'" and she stroked that well-shaped feature complacently.

"You don't seem so very pleased," she added, surprised at the quietness with which her announcement was received.

We were all assembled at Sketchley's, the poor chap didn't boast a studio in the proper sense of the word, but did his work in a large attic with a sloping roof, but a strong north light.

Anyway, it was good enough for him to turn out some first-class black and white work, which ought to have won him more recognition than it did.

"Well, you see, Roma," said our host dubiously, "Tremaine is rather a corker, 'always hung on the line,' so to speak, and therefore with a lofty contempt for those unfortunates who're 'skied,' or left upon the floor. None of us know him—except Bob—and he's not the sort of man one could call upon *sans cérémonie*."

"I don't see what you're aiming at, Jack," said Roma.

"My dear," said Masters, who by virtue of his having two or three girls of his own, always spoke with a certain authority, "if you sit to Tremaine, you'll be going right out of our set. After him I fear we shall appear very small beer indeed. And we don't want to lose you, Roma."

The girl tossed her hair from her eyes with a quick, impatient movement.

"If you think I'm such a cad as that," she exclaimed, "you'd better have nothing else to do with me."

The door banged, and there was a sound of light footsteps flying down the stairs.

"She'll come back again presently," said Sketchely composedly. "I'm doing her head for *The Crayon* and Roma never breaks an engagement."

Sure enough in about an hour she reappeared. All traces of temper vanished, as sweet and charming as only she could be. Nothing more was said of Tremaine, but a day or two after I met her just outside his studio. I'm not an observant fellow as a rule, but I couldn't help noticing that she looked prettier than ever, and that her costume—always tasteful if a wee bit careless—was put on with more attention to detail than she usually bestowed. Gloves perfectly fitting, and wonderful to relate buttoned straight, shoes as dainty as the feet they covered.

"Why, Roma," I exclaimed, "this is indeed most wonderful. I don't remember to have seen you for ages in a pair of gloves."

"Don't tease," she interrupted. "I'm bound to look tidy at Mr. Tremaine's."

"H'm! Since when have you honoured your artistic friends by the prefix of 'Mr.' Mostly you appear to forget that they possess anything but nicknames. I fully expected you to allude to the great R. A. by this time as Phil."

She flushed a little under my gaze.

"He's different from all of you, silly boy," she said and ran up the steps.

We didn't see so much of her as usual for the next month, and when she did look in it was usually only a very hurried visit. It happened that I was the only one at that time to whom she was sitting, and save for the two or three hours a week that she spent in the studio I rarely saw her.

Somehow or other she eluded us. Sketchley tried to corner her, as to the neglect she showed her old friends, but she answered in a fashion so unlike herself—the careless, charming, brilliant Roma we all knew, that no further reproaches were attempted.

"Jack," she said with a thrill in her voice, "you don't mean it, you can't mean it, that you think I have grown forgetful, ungrateful to you all. Why, I should be the basest girl on earth if that were so."

She had grown quite white, and there was a suspicious brightness about her eyes—Roma's eyes that were the home of laughter.

Of course we all declared we didn't mean it, and Sketchley called himself all manner of hard names for having suggested such a thing. All the same we felt that in some subtle way Roma had changed, though we were none of us clever enough to discover how.

And then one day a man of the name of Cavendish, a friend of Owen's, but a stranger to most of us, threw an unwelcome light upon the subject.

"Haven't I heard you chaps rave about old Phillingham's daughter," he said as he pottered round Sketchley's attic.

"Rather," said Jack, "most perfect face you've ever seen."

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Cavendish listened with an amused smile.

"I heard that she was sittting to some of her father's friends, but I was a bit surprised to learn that she was one of Tremaine's models. I was up there the other day," he went on, "and had a little chat with her. She's a charming girl as well as a beauty."

No one spoke, and he glanced from one to the other in a puzzled sort of fashion.

"Why don't one of you paint her portrait for the New?" he asked.

Sketchley turned abruptly from his easel.

"We've all painted Roma so many times that I fancy she's a bit tired of our style. Wants a change."

"Ah," said Cavendish, "well Tremaine is certainly a change. All the same I should try and persuade Miss Roma not to put all her eggs into one basket."

None of us commented on what Cavendish said, but Sketchley voiced the general feeling, as, knocking the ashes out of his pipe, he remarked, later:

"I shall write to Bob to-night. It's time he came back."

Meanwhile Jack Sketchley bestirred himself in an unusual, and mysterious fashion. He took to denying himself to his friends, working like a fiend at all hours until I grew quite worried with trying to imagine why he did it. At last, however, I arrived at the solution of the mystery.

"I've been doing a lot of work lately," he said, "really good work, not your wretched pot-boilers, and I've received a commission from *The Easel* to illustrate a series of articles on Egyptian art. It appears that Tremaine is a great gun on that sort of thing, and I've a letter of introduction to him. Do you care to come with me to present it."

Needless to say I went, and never was I more supremely conscious of the great gulf that lies between the "elect" of art, who sit in high places, and worship—if at all—luxuriously in her temple, and the sweepers and cleaners thereof, who labouring sorely, reap no reward but love.

We were ushered into a delightfully cool oak-pannelled room, leading into the studio. It was evident that the great R. A. had forgotten that we were waiting, for he continued his conversation with some one we did not see.

Judging by the tones of his voice he was speaking to a woman, doubtless young and pretty, and to whom he seemed to be making love. It was an uncomfortable position for us, and, presently Sketchley rose, and drawing back the curtains, which separated the room we were in from the studio, prepared to enter.

Suddenly he drew back, and after a moment I did the same. Philip Tremaine was standing by the window, holding the hands of a slight young figure in his own. As we looked he deftly slipped his arm about her waist, and drew her to him.

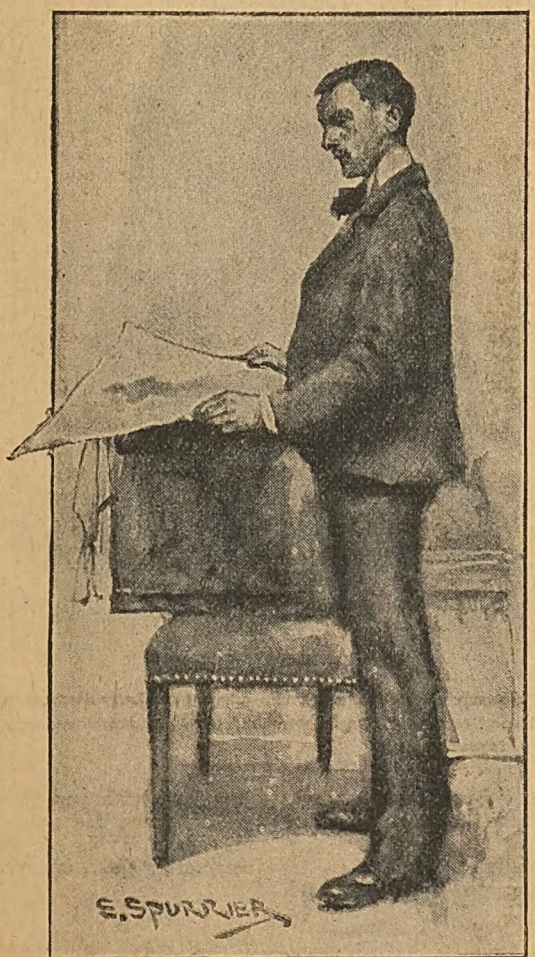
"No, no," she cried faintly protesting. But even as she spoke she yielded, and we could see the hot blood dye her face as he stooped and kissed her on the lips.

"You love me, sweet?"

"Ah, so much," and then she broke from him, and hid her face behind her hands.

"Roma," he whispered, "Roma," and Roma, wilful, head strong Roma, came at his call. A minute later and a sudden influx of visitors—a party of fine ladies—swept into the room, from thence into the studio, and we followed.

Tremaine received us with his usual charm of manner, and was especially gracious to Sketchley in spite of Jack's determined stiffness. As for the women they surrounded him in a moment and compliments, delicate and flattering, sounded on all sides, enough indeed to turn a stronger head than Philip Tremaine's.



"Haven't I heard you chaps rave about old Phillingham's daughter?" he said, as he pottered round Sketchley's attic.

All this time Roma stood aloof, waiting as in truth we waited, for him to introduce her to his friends. Some of the women stared at her in a supercilious sort of fashion, others criticised her with a well bred air of insolence. One in a loud tone of voice asked, "If she were a model," and advanced to inspect her as a curiosity.

Roma stood her ground quietly, conversing in an undertone with Sketchley and me, and apparently taking no heed of Tremaine's neglect.

"Are you coming, Roma?" I asked after a while. "Jack and I are going now."

"Yes," she said, "I will come."

She advanced quietly to Tremaine and said something, what, I could not hear. I caught however something of the reply.

"It's not my fault, Roma, indeed I could not help it. If only you were not a model."

It was a very silent walk home, neither of us had the heart to talk to the poor child, and Jack seemed too indignant after she had left to do more than swear fiercely under his breath.

That evening Bob came home and as of yore, most of us turned up to see him. A sudden violent ringing of the bell disturbed us, we glanced at each other.

"Sounds like Roma," said Masters, and Roma it proved to be.

She went straight up to Bob, her slim figure looking pathetically childish, her big eyes infinitely sad.

"Bob," she said simply, "will you please send me to school, as you once promised? I'm tired and I don't want to be a model any more."

* * * *

It was some three years later when I next saw Roma Phillingham. She had more than fulfilled the promise of her youth, and was the most perfectly beautiful woman I have ever seen. All her waywardness had vanished. In the brilliant woman of the world there was no trace of the charming little Bohemian we had all spoiled and petted.

She made her *début* under the wing of old Lady Scarlett, a distant relative of Bob's, who had taken an immense fancy to his *protégée*. The beautiful Miss Phillingham, her face, her voice, her admirers were the sensation of the hour. And none so persistent, so admiring as the great R. A., Sir Philip—he had lately been created a Baronet—Tremaine. We used to talk over her triumphs, and speculate as to who would be the lucky man. Needless to say Sketchley and I never referred to the scene in the studio, but somehow or other I fancy Bob had an inkling of it and how matters stood in that direction.

One night I dropped in on Bob for a chat, and found him regularly down in the mouth. He was studying a society paper which I remember contained a rumour of Roma's engagement to Sir Philip. He put it down as I entered, but didn't seemingly want to talk, so we smoked in silence.

After a while he remarked casually:

"I see our little girl's going to make a grand match. I hope Tremaine is worthy of her, but I doubt it."

"Most people would consider her very lucky," I said. "I suppose it's certain she's accepted him?"

"Nothing certain in this world, dear boy, except rent day," said a mocking voice.

"Roma," I exclaimed.

She laughed and turned to Bob.

"I've come back again, you see," she said; "airs and graces and all. You won't send me away, will you?"

Bob rose and laid his hand upon the bell.

"I'm going to send for a hansom," he said calmly, "and pack you off at once. Go, will you, and see to it, there's a good fellow."

I went obediently, returning some few minutes later with the intelligence that the cab was at the door. As I entered—the room was in shadow save for the flickering fire light—for the moment I could not discover where Miss Roma was. After a bit my vision, mental as well as physical, grew clearer.

Roma was kneeling by Bob Owen's side, her head upon his shoulder.

"And you really want to know why I refused Sir Philip's offer?" she asked softly. "It's a foolish, and I'm afraid you'll think it a very selfish, reason."

"Well?"

In the dim light she drew nearer.

"I don't want to marry him," she answered, "because if you don't mind I'd rather marry you."

"Roma——"

"Oh, Bob, Bob," she cried, "my darling, let me stay here with you for ever."

He opened his arms and like a tired child she crept into them, laying her head upon his heart. Henceforth her resting place for ever.

JOHN K. PROTHERO.

She made her *debut* under the wing of old Lady Scarlett, a distant relative of Bob's, who had taken an immense fancy to his *protégée*.

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of H. E. Dudeney's popular novel, "Hagar of Homerton," to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source must be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. H. Cawte, of Frimley Road, Camberley. Attempts for this week's prize may deal with any subject, and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, January 8th. Post-cards only, please.

Their Proper Place.

A FEW days ago two or three reservists belonging to the Guards (all friends) were about to rejoin their regiment at the depôt, prior to their departure for South Africa.

They arrived at the local station just as the heavily laden train was about to depart.

"Hurry up," roared the guard, in deep stentorian tones, from his van which was next the engine. "Hurry up, you'll have to come in here with me, there's no room anywhere else."

"Never mind about that," replied they altogether "Everything's just right. Here we are altogether, all Guards, all in the *van*, and all at the front. Hurrah!"

A New Metal-Polish.

THE other day a lady discovered her servant-girl trying to clean the fender with a copy of *Short Stories*.

"Bridget!" exclaimed the astonished lady, "whatever are you doing with my paper? You know I only bought it this morning."

"Oh!" replied Bridget, "you said that it always brightened you up, and so I'm trying it on the fender."

He Returned Them All.

THEY had quarrelled, and the high spirited girl said, as she handed him a package: "There, Mr. Ferguson, are the presents you have given me. Now that all is over between us, sir, there should be no reminders of the foolish past."

"You are right, Miss Keezer," he said humbly, "and I suppose I must return the gifts you have presented to me."

"I never gave you anything, sir, that I remember."

"Indeed you did."

"Sir, I——"

"Miss Keezer—Katie!" he exclaimed, with something that sounded like a sob, "I value them beyond everything else in the world! It would break my heart to return them, but there is nothing left for me to do."

"Will you kindly tell me, sir, what you are speaking of?"

"I am speaking, Katie, of the kisses you have given me! They are not mine now. It is my duty to restore them. Forgive me, darling, but I cannot go away without——"

"Oh, George!"

When the clock struck eleven, about three hours later, George was still returning them.

Pricked Their Victim with Pins.

IT was at a tent meeting held some years ago.

During a lengthy address one of the audience had fallen asleep, leaning against the side of the tent.

He suddenly awoke with a yell, and used strong language, to the amazement and horror of the hearers.

It was afterwards found out that some boys, who were outside, seeing the bulky figure pressing against the canvas, had probed it with pins and produced this amusing incident.

A Good Way of Getting Even.

A DUBLIN tramcar the other day was the scene of an incident that fully deserves immortalisation, if only to illustrate the natural keenness of wit and kindness of heart possessed by the lower classes in Ireland.

The car was hailed on O'Connell Bridge by a countrified looking girl, very like a farm servant in search of a city place. She got on to the step and coolly demanded of the conductor:

"Change for half-a-sovereign, please."

The man looked at her open-mouthed, and was preparing to deliver a volley of indignant abuse, when his expression suddenly changed; the innocent confidence of the country girl had evidently given him an idea.

"Who tould ye to ask for change?" he said.

"A man at the crossing," answered the girl. "He told me just to stop the first tramcar I see, and ask for change, and they'd give it to me, aisy."

"Where's your half-sovereign?" demanded the conductor.

She gave it, he counted out the change, handed it to her in silence, and started the tram as she made for the pavement again.

"I'm even with the mane villyun, whoever he was, anyway," commented the conductor, and the passengers looked as if they would have liked to clap.

An Army Contract.

PASSING along Princes Street, Edinburgh, one day, a herculean Scots Grey stopped at the post-office, and called on a street arab to polish his boots. The feet of the dragoon were in proportion to his height, and, looking at the tremendous boots before him, the arab knelt down on the pavement, and shouted out to his chum across the roadway:

"Jamie, come ower an' gie's a hand; I've got an army contract."

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Proofs of Madness.

A HULL lady went to a doctor to consult him as to her husband's sanity.

"What proofs of madness has he given?" asked the physician.

"Last night," she replied, "he ate a pie large enough for four men, then he went to the kitchen and kissed the cook."

"That is nothing, madam," said the doctor. "Had he kissed the pie and eaten the cook, the matter would have been serious."

Why Neighbour Jones Couldn't Gather Them.

IN a certain Sunday-school, the teacher was endeavouring to explain that a man could not expect to reap if he never took the trouble to sow.

"But what he does sow he will reap," he continued. "To make matters plainer I will ask you a question. If I planted turnip seed, what do you think I should get?"

"Turnips!" shouted several.

"Right!" said the teacher.

"But it doan't allus come off," put in one precocious youth. "It didn't wi' neighbour Jones."

"Indeed," remarked the teacher.

"Yis," went on the bright scholar, "'e sowed some taters a little while ago, but 'e ain't reaped none."

"Well, perhaps he's gathered them."

"No 'e ain't gathered 'em."

"Well, dug them up, then."

"No, nor dug 'em up naythur."

"Oh, I see," smiled the teacher. "The potatoes are not ready yet. He will gather them by-and-bye."

"No, I doan't think as 'e will," persisted the scholar.

"Why?" asked the puzzled teacher.

"Why, you see," responded the other calmly, "we gathered 'em when he was in town the day before he was going to."

The "Waits" Remuneration.

LAST Xmas day the vicar of a certain village near Birmingham received a visit from the village "waits" who provided a rich (?) treat outside the vicarage for about an hour.

On the following morning the leader called to receive the remuneration. He was shown into the vicar's study, and he at once began:

"Sir, I am the leader of those 'waits' who paid you a visit last night."

"I am glad you have called," said the vicar.

"Yes," beamed the other, "we thought you would gladly remunerate us for our performance."

"What!" exclaimed the vicar, "you have come for money! Why I thought you had come to apologise!"

Collapse of musical director.

The Representative of Death.

A VIENNA paper relates an amusing incident which happened to a great lady just recovered from a long and severe illness. Seated in her boudoir, she was looking over the cards of condolence that had been left with her.

Among the names of counts, barons, and other aristocratic sympathisers, emblazoned with coronets and coats of arm, she came upon the plain card with the simple inscription of "Herman Berger." In vain the lady asked who Herman Berger was. The servants could not give her any information than that the individual had been a remarkably handsome young man.

The lady's curiosity was excited, and she gave orders to admit the person in case he should call again. The order was punctually obeyed, and on the next day she received a really charming young man, dressed in exquisite style, who evidently felt greatly embarrassed at the honour of a *tête-à-tête* with the still charming, though somewhat faded, beauty.

"I can hardly find words," said the lady with a blush, "to thank you for the sympathy you have manifested for a stranger."

"I beg your pardon, gracious lady," stammered the dandy; "but I am the agent of Messrs. A. and B., the undertakers."

Not a Sack!

AT a certain builder's yard in Glasgow, it is the custom to pay the men their money in little bags each week.

One Saturday, the master told Pat, an Irish labourer, when paying him, that he should not require his services any more.

On the following Monday, as the master was going round the yard, he saw Pat at work, as usual.

"Hullo, Pat!" said he; "didn't I give you the sack on Saturday?"

"No, sir," said Pat; "shure it was the same little bag I've always had."

Pat's services were retained.

A Flattering Testimonial.

A VERY eminent London surgeon, one of the lights of the profession, one day observed a gentleman knocked down by a runaway horse. He went to his aid and found he had broken his leg. It was only a simple fracture, but the man was badly hurt.

The surgeon used his umbrella as a splint, and with his own hands borrowed handkerchiefs, bandaged the limb tightly, put the patient in a cab, and drove to the nearest hospital. There they were received by a young medical student.

"You've bandaged this pretty well," said the youth patronisingly.

"Not at all," said the other.

"I suppose you've been attending some ambulance class. They say a little learning is a dangerous thing, but the little you've learnt you've put to good account. I can't give you your umbrella now, but if you leave your address it shall be sent to your house."

"I had better give you my card," said the eminent surgeon. And he did so.

THE GOLDEN GATES.

A Powerful Romance of the City and the Sea.

By HEADON HILL.

Just commencing in PEARSON'S WEEKLY. Get a copy and begin it to-day. You'll thank us for reminding you.

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THE REAL STORY ABOUT KETTLESHAM.

WHEN the members of the No. 2 touring company of *The Hidden Hand*—a drama in three acts and several scenes—heard that the agent in advance had been ordered to Kettlesham, and that they were booked to play at the dreary colliery town for a fortnight, they experienced feelings which they were careful not to express.

It had been arranged that they were to proceed to Bray-bridge, but Bray-bridge had been the scene of a mining disaster, which, as it had plunged the whole community into gloom, rendered it, for their purpose, impossible, or at least inadvisable. Kettlesham was the substitute, and Kettlesham excited emotions amongst the histrions that were the reverse of pleasant.

It was not the town so much as the theatre that they objected to. Few people are so superstitious as actors, and there was scarcely one who had played there, who had not, all unknown to the audience, been hampered by a foreboding of disaster that at least on some occasion had been realised. Tales of suicide, of foul play on the stage, of accidents in the wings that baffled explanations, of a hundred-and-one untoward things had centred round the building, and by mere dint of repetition had come to be believed.

No doubt had it been possible to trace these stories to one common source they would have been dispelled. But then as nearly every "pro" had a different tale of disaster, with a different explanation, this was impossible, and the stories grew and grew until at last there was probably not one touring company who did not hold the place in dread. Certainly if that company existed it was not *The Hidden Hand* Company No. 2.

Its members, however, did not express their feelings. On the contrary, they were loud in their scorn of the thing that caused them.

"We shall get to the bottom of those ridiculous yarns poor Grimsby's suicide set afloat even if we do play to empty houses," the heavy man remarked. "Really, it's time such preposterous rot was put on the shelf."

"As you say, dear boy," the light comedian assented, "they're quite rot, of course. But I always understood it was Milly Langdon's extraordinary death that gave Kettlesham its reputation."

A lady member of the troupe interrupted fiercely:

"Milly Langdon's not dead. I met her before we left town. She's quite well, and married, and living in the suburbs."

"It's the same thing," the comedian retorted wholly unabashed, "anyway, she disappeared."

"And," continued his corrector, "I always understood it was Mr. Keighton's collapse there that made peopl think the place funny."

The heavy man and the comedian shrugged their shoulders at this new schism. Both were prepared to confute it on the clearest possible grounds, when the leading lady—a person of great dignity and some importance—imparted a new tone to the discussion.

"In my opinion," she announced angrily, "these stories are very discreditable to the dignity of the profession. I've no patience with anyone who can repeat such rubbish. It's my firm belief that the whole thing has its origin in too much drink," and with this, a hard knock at the heavy man, and her week's salary, she flounced out of the room, plainly discomposed, and plainly angry with the others for making her so.

But, the leading lady's protest notwithstanding, the discussion continued. All the members of the company save two were present, for it was treasury day, and only the leading lady had been paid. As each member had a different explanation, and as they each insisted that theirs was the right one, the debate would have probably been indefinitely prolonged, had not the arrival of the absent member of the troupe, Sidney Transome, ended it.

Transome was a man held in peculiar respect by his brother histrions, more probably because he had that quality so rare among actors—reserve—than from the fact that he was of a higher culture than their own. It was a habit of the company's to refer matters in dispute to Transome's arbitration. Now they sought it eagerly.

His arrival was the signal for an instantaneous rush in his direction, and a universal demand for his decision as to which was "the real story about Kettlesham." But on this occasion his *confreres* were to be disappointed; and for once his reserve was broken down. For no sooner did he hear the name of the town they were to play at, than his face changed—changed so suddenly, and indeed so awfully, that the men about him were silent. For a moment he stood with his hand to his head, the next he turned sharply on his heel, and without a word walked out.

Then *The Hidden Hand* company No. 2 drew their salaries, this time in silence. Transome's face had shown them what they all felt—dread.

* * * * *

Whatever was the cause of Transome's inexplicable conduct, which the leading lady was understood to have referred to in tones of severe censure, he played his

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part the first night at Kettlesham with a *verve* and force that captured the audience and astonished his brother actors. As a rule, the icy restraint that marked him out in everyday life hung on him even on the boards, and cramped his powers. Now he had flung it aside, and for once did himself justice.

And this perhaps was just as well. For the actors, men and women, were in a state of hysterical nervousness and boastful self-assertiveness that rendered their performances inept. The contagion of panic had seized them the moment they had seen that Transome felt afraid, and panic held their souls firmly now.

All except one—that was little Alice Etheridge, or if she felt afraid she disguised it cleverly. She alone played up to Transome's lead, and betrayed not the least sign of nervousness. But then as she had but a small part, and was not generally considered of any importance, her example did not inspire imitation.

Still, except for bad acting, things went without a hitch, and the performance over, the histrions' spirits recovered wonderfully. At the bar matters were discussed excitedly, but this time reassuringly. The relief from the tension through which all had passed found expression in loud talk and strong assertions, the heavy man being particularly in evidence.

"I always said," he remarked, "that the thing was pure nonsense, and ought not to be discussed. Only if you remember Transome insisted on doing so. Transome, I consider, is wholly responsible for the needless anxiety which some of our ladies have been suffering to-night."

And Transome being absent, this was the general verdict.

"But," said one of the ladies in question, speaking in a whisper that was still reminiscent of awe, "they say it always happens on the third night, don't they?"

The company became instantly indignant. To tell the truth the reminder that there were eleven other evenings of anxiety to go through was the pin-prick to their bladder of joy. And they were all correspondingly angry with the person who had given it.

What was it that happened on the third night, they asked, and if the lady did not know, why had she spoken? In fact, the protests her innocent remark aroused were so violent as to cause her to tremble. Finally, it ended in the formation by the heavy man and the leading lady of a league—which was instantly joined by everyone present, "For the Suppression of Superstition in the Profession," and by the retirement of the timid lady in a flood of tears and an opera cloak.

Despite this courageous conduct, however, the members of the company felt by no means comfortable. And, indeed, they had some excuse for the fact that they looked forward to each performance with secret dread. To act a part, even for the hundredth time, and to act it well, requires a large amount of self-control, and nervous energy under any conditions: to act with the momentary expectation of something dreadful happening, of the silence of the audience being broken by a shriek, or of hearing a cry from the wings, is a trying experience indeed. To do so for several nights in succession is even more so. And the result was that the nerves of the company were worn to fiddle strings.

The leading lady became "indisposed" and her part—that of the heroine—had to be played by Alice Etheridge, while the heavy man fell back on alcoholic support to a greater extent than before. Even the stage-manager became affected, and on several occasions deserted his post, with the result that supers walked on and off at wrong moments.

And yet the thing, the calamity, the disaster did not take place, and as night after night went by even the fear-stricken actors began to think that, as they had loudly asserted, "nothing unusual would happen."

But happen it did though not the third, or the fifth, but on the last night of the run.

It was a woman who caused it, a woman who had been introduced behind the scenes that very night. She was known to some of the company as a girl who had been on the stage and had left it "for something better," as she said—(the "something" being marriage). That evening two of her old comrades had met her in the town, and brought her to the theatre, and during the last act she had stood in the wings watching Transome's performance.

Now behind the scenes is, while the play proceeds, a busy place, and the members of the company were far too much occupied with their own affairs to notice that their visitor had consumed during the evening more liquid refreshment than was good for her, or that towards the end of the piece she began to display marked excitement.

They had in fact forgotten her when the catastrophe happened.

It was at the end of the final scene—the scene in which the hero, parted from the heroine by a series of impossible events claims her for his own, and it was while Transome was delivering his last speech that it happened.

"A man's wife," he said, "should be the finer spirit of his life, through which the grosser filters only to be purified anew. She should never—she can never—leave him. In all he does, her spirit should abide with him—in his struggles that he may win worthily, in his hopes that he may plan nobly, in his defeats that they may teach him. And the spirit that lifts should guide him also. She should be a shield to cover him, a star to guide him, and a fire in his heart to urge him on, and that woman—my wife——"

Scarcely had he said the words than the audience saw him drop the heroine's hands sharply, and following his eyes, saw that another figure had come on the scene—the figure of a woman, who swayed unsteadily in her walk, but yet came towards Transome with set purpose on her face, a woman whose dress seemed gaudy even on the stage—gaudy yet soiled.

Then they saw Transome cower, and hang his head like a man detected in a mean offence. Still the woman advanced.

All this they saw with Transome's last words "That woman—my wife," ringing in their hearts, and then suddenly the man changed and faced them boldly, a passion seemed to shake his frame. "My wife," he shouted, "My wife," and then, pointing at the woman: "That is my wife," he said.

Somehow it was the woman who cowered then, but as the curtain came down on her, the fainting heroine, and the hero of the story, the audience were silent. One does not cheer reality.

* * * * *

They have added many to the stories about Kettlesham since then, but the true one is not of the number.

Transome is a big actor now and his shyness hampers him no more. They say it left him for ever the night he told his secret to the world.

CHAS. S. JONES.

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The Angel of the Revolution

By George Griffith

CHAPTER LIII.

In Old Aboukir's Bay.

Five days later was fought a second battle of the Nile, a battle compared with which the former conflict, momentous as it had been, would have seemed but child's play. On the one side Admiral Beresford, in command of the Mediterranean squadron, had collected every available ship and torpedo boat to do battle for the defence of the all-important Suez Canal, and opposed to him was an immense armament formed by the junction of the Russian Black Sea squadron with the Franco-Italian fleet, or rather those portions of it which had survived the attacks or eluded the vigilance of the British admiral.

The battle, fought almost on the ancient battle-ground of Nelson and Collingwood, was incomparably the greatest sea-fight in the history of war.

The fleet under Admiral Beresford's command consisted of fifty-five battleships of the first and second class, forty-six armoured and seventy-two unarmoured cruisers, fifty-four gunboats, and two hundred and seventy torpedo boats, while the allied fleets of the League mustered between them forty-six battleships, seventy-five armoured and sixty-three unarmoured cruisers, forty gunboats, and two hundred and fifty torpedo boats.

The battle began soon after sundown on the 24th of August, and raged continuously for over sixty hours. The whole issue of the fight was the question of the command of the Mediterranean and the British line of communication with India and the East *vid* the Suez Canal.

The prize was well worthy of the tremendous struggle that the two contending forces waged for it, and from the two Admirals in command to the boys employed on the most insignificant duties about the ships, every one of the combatants seemed equally impressed with the magnitude of the momentous issues at stake.

To the League victory meant a deadly blow inflicted upon the only enemy now seriously to be reckoned with. It meant the severing of the British empire into two portions and the cutting of the one remaining channel of supply upon which the heart of the Empire now depended for its nutrition. To destroy Admiral Beresford's fleet would be to achieve as great a triumph on the sea as the armies of the League had achieved on land by the taking of Berlin, Vienna, and Constantinople. On the other hand the defeat of the Franco-Italian fleets meant complete command of the Mediterranean and the keeping open of the Suez Canal, the maintenance of communication with India and Australia by the shortest route, and what was by no means the least important consideration, the vindication of British prestige in Egypt, the Soudan, and India. It was with these enormous gains and losses before their eyes that the two forces engaged and fought as perhaps men had never fought with each other in the world before.

Everything that science and experience could suggest was done by the leaders of both sides. Human life was counted as nothing in the balance, and deeds of the most reckless heroism were performed in countless instances as the mighty struggle progressed.

With such inflexible determination was the battle waged on either side, and so appalling had been the destruction accomplished by the weapons brought into play, that by sunrise on the morning of the 27th, more than half the opposing fleets had been destroyed, and of the remainder the majority were so crippled that a continuance of the fight had become a matter of physical impossibility.

What advantage remained appeared to be on the side of the remnants of the Franco-Italian fleet, but this was speedily negatived an hour after sunrise by the appearance of a fresh British squadron consisting of five battleships, fifteen cruisers, and a large flotilla of gunboats and torpedo boats which had passed through the canal during the night from Aden and Suakim and appeared on the scene just in time to turn the tide of battle, decisively in favour of the British Admiral.

As soon as this new force got into action it went to work with terrible effectiveness, and in three hours there was not a single vessel that was still flying the French or Italian flag. The victory had it is true been bought at a tremendous price, but it was complete and decisive, and at the moment that the last of the ships of the League struck her flag, Admiral Beresford stood in the same glorious position as Sir George Rodney had done a hundred and twenty-two years before, when he saved the British Empire in the ever-memorable victory of the 12th of April, 1782.

The triumph in the Mediterranean was, however, only a set-off to a disaster which had occurred more than five weeks previously in the Atlantic. The Russian fleet, which had broken the blockade of the Sound, with the assistance of the *Lucifer*, had, after coaling at Aberdeen, made its way into the Atlantic, and there, in conjunction with the Franco-Italian fleets, operating along the Atlantic steamer route, had, after a series of desperate engagements, succeeded in breaking up the line of British communication with America and Canada.

This result had been achieved mainly in consequence of the contrast between the necessary methods of attack and defence. On the one hand, Britain had been compelled to maintain an extended line of ocean defence more than three thousand miles in length, and her ships had further been hampered by the absolute necessity of attending first to the protection of the Atlantic liners, and secondly to warding off isolated attacks which were directed upon different parts of the line by squadrons which could not be attacked in turn without breaking the line of convoy which it was all essential to preserve intact.

For two or three weeks there had been a series of running fights, but at length the ocean chain had broken under the

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perpetual strain, and a repulse inflicted on the Irish squadron by a superior force of French, Italian, and Spanish warships had settled the question of the command of the Atlantic in favour of the League. The immediate result of this was that food supplies from the West practically stopped.

Now and then a fleet Atlantic greyhound ran the blockade and brought her priceless cargo into a British port, but as the weeks went by these occurrences became fewer and further between, till the time news was received in London of the investment of the fortresses of the Quadrilateral by the innumerable hosts of the League, brought together by the junction of the French and Russian armies of the North and the conquerors of Vienna and Constantinople, who had returned on their tracks after garrisoning their conquests in the East.

Food in Britain, already at war prices, now began to rise still further, and soon touched famine prices. Wheat, which in the last decade of the nineteenth century had averaged about £9 a ton, rose to over £31 a ton, its price two years before the Battle of Waterloo. Other imported food-stuffs, of course, rose in proportion with the staple commodity, and the people of Britain saw, at first dimly, then more and more clearly, the real issue that had been involved in the depopulation of the rural districts to swell the populations of the towns, and the consequent lapse of enormous areas of land either into pasturage or unused wilderness.

In other words, Britain began to see approaching her doors an enemy before whose assault all human strength is impotent, and all valour unavailing. Like Imperial Rome, she had depended for her food supply on external sources, and now these sources were one by one being cut off.

The loss of the command of the Atlantic, the breaking of the Baltic blockade, and the consequent closing of all the continental ports save Hamburg, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Antwerp, had left her entirely dependent upon her own miserably insufficient internal resources and the Mediterranean route to India and the East.

More than this, too, only Hamburg, Antwerp, and the forces of the Quadrilateral, now stood between her and actual invasion, that supreme calamity which, until the raid upon Aberdeen, had been for centuries believed to be impossible.

Once let the League triumph in the Netherlands, as it had done in Central and South-Eastern Europe, and its legions would descend like an avalanche upon the shores of England, and the Lion of the Seas would find himself driven to bay in the stronghold which he had held inviolate for nearly a thousand years.

CHAPTER LIV.

FROM CHAOS TO ARCADIE.

DURING the three months of incessant strife and carnage which deluged the plains and valleys of Europe with blood after the fall of Berlin the Terrorists took no part whatever in the war.

At long intervals an air-ship was seen from the earth flyng at full speed through the upper regions of the atmosphere, now over Europe, now over America, and now over Australia or the Cape of Good Hope, but if they held any communication with the earth they did so secretly, and only paid the briefest of visits, the objects of which could but be guessed at.

When one was sighted the fact was mentioned in the newspapers, and vague speculations were indulged it, but there was soon little room left for these in the public attention, especially in Britain, for as the news of disaster after disaster came pouring in, and the hosts of the League drew nearer and nearer to the western shores of Europe all eyes were turned more and more anxiously across "the silver streak" which now alone separated the peaceful hills and valleys of England and Scotland from the destroying war-storm which had so swiftly desolated the fields of Europe, and all hearts were heavy with apprehension of coming sorrows.

The rapidity of their movements had naturally led to the supposition that several of the air-ships had taken the air for some unknown purpose, but in reality there were only two of them afloat during nearly the whole of the three months.

Of these, one was the *Orion*, on board of which Tremayne was visiting the various centres of the Brotherhood throughout the English-speaking world, making everything ready for the carrying out at the proper time of the great project to which he had devoted himself since the memorable night at Alanmere when he had seen the vision of the world's Armageddon. The other was under the command of Michael Roburoff, who was busy in America and Canada perfecting the preparations for checkmating the designs of the American Ring which were described in a former chapter.

The remainder of the members of the Inner Circle and those of the Outer Circle, living in Aeria, were quietly pursuing the most peaceful avocations, building houses and water-mills, clearing fields and laying out gardens, fishing in the lake and streams, and hunting in the forests as though they had never heard of the horrors of war and had no part or share in the Titanic strife whose final issue they would so soon have to go forth and decide.

One of the hardest workers in the colony was the Admiral of the aerial fleet. Morning after morning he shut himself up in his laboratory for three or four hours experimenting with explosives of various kinds, and especially on a new form of fire-shell which he had invented, and which he was now busy perfecting in preparation for the next, and as he hoped, final conflict that he would have to wage with the forces of despotism and barbarism.

The afternoons he spent supervising the erection of the mills, and the construction of new machinery, and in exploring the mountain sides in search of mineral wealth of which he was delighted to find abundant promise that was afterwards realised beyond his expectations.

On these exploring expeditions he was frequently accompanied by Natasha and Radna and her husband. Sometimes Arnold would be enticed away from his chemicals, and his designs upon the lives of his enemies, and after breakfasting soon after sunrise would go off for a long day's ramble to some unknown part of their wonderful domain, in which, like children in a fairy-land, they were always discovering some new wonders and beauties. And, indeed, no children could have been happier or freer from care than they were during this delightful interval in the tragedy in which they were so soon to play such conspicuous parts.

The two wedded lovers, with the dark past put far behind them for ever, found perfect happiness in each other's society, and so, it is almost needless to add, left Arnold and Natasha pretty much to their own devices. Indeed, Natasha had more than once declared that she would have to get the Princess to join the party, as Radna had proved herself a helpless failure as a chaperone.

Everyone in the valley by this time looked upon Arnold and Natasha as lovers, though their rank in the Brotherhood was so high that no one ventured to speak of them as betrothed save by implication. How Natas regarded them was known only to himself. He, of course, saw their intimacy, and since he said nothing he doubtless looked upon it with approval, but whether he regarded it as an intimacy of friends or of lovers remained a mystery even to Natasha herself, for he never by any chance made an allusion to it.

As for Arnold he had scrupulously observed the compact tacitly made between them on the first and only occasion that he had ever spoken words of love to her. They were the best of friends, the closest companions, and their intercourse with each other was absolutely frank and unrestrained, just as it would have been between two close friends of the same sex; but they understood each other perfectly, and by no

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word or deed did either cross the line that divides friendship from love.

She trusted him absolutely in all things, and he took this trust as a sacred pledge between them that until his part of their compact had been performed love was a forbidden subject not even to be approached.

So perfectly did Natasha play her part that though he spent hours and hours alone with her on their exploring expeditions, and in rowing and sailing on the lake, and though he passed many another hour in solitude weighing her every word and action, he was utterly unable to truthfully congratulate himself on having made the slightest progress towards gaining that love without which, even if he held her to the compact in the day of victory, victory itself would be robbed of its crowning glory and dearest prize.

To a weaker man it would have been an impossible situation, the constant and familiar companionship with a girl whose wonderful beauty dazzled his eyes and fired his blood as he looked upon it, and whose winning charm of manner and grace of speech and action seemed to glorify her beauty until she seemed a being almost beyond the reach of merely human love—rather one of those daughters of men whom the sons of God looked upon in the early days of the world, and found so fair that they forsook Heaven itself to woo them.

Trained and disciplined as he had been in the sternest of all schools, and strengthened as he was by the knowledge of the compact that existed between them, there were moments when his self-control was very sorely tried, moments when her hand would be clasped in his, or rested on his shoulder as he helped her across a stream or down some steep hillside, or when in the midst of some animated discussion she would stop short and face him and suddenly confound his logic with a flash from her eyes and a smile on her lips that literally forced him to put forth a muscular effort to prevent himself from catching her in his arms and risking everything for just one kiss, one taste of the forbidden fruit within his reach, and yet parted from him by a sea of blood and flame that still lay between the world and that empire of peace which he promised to win for her sweet sake.

Once and once only she had tried him almost too far. They had been discussing the possibility of ruling the world without the ultimate appeal to force when the nations, weary at length of war, should have consented to disarm, and she, carried away by her own eloquent pleading for the ultimate triumph of peace and goodwill on earth, had laid her hand upon his arm, and was looking up at him with her lovely face aglow with the sweetest expression even he had ever seen upon it.

Their eyes met, and there was a sudden silence between them. The eloquent words died upon her lips and a deep flush rose to her cheeks, and then faded instantly away, leaving her pale and with a look almost of terror in her eyes. He took a quick step backwards, and, turning away as though he feared to look any longer upon her beauty, said in a low tone that trembled with the strength of his repressed passion:

"Natasha, for God's sake remember that I am only made of flesh and blood!"

In a moment she was by his side again, this time with her eyes downcast and her proud little head bent as though in acknowledgment of his reproof. Then she looked up again, and held out her hand and said:

"Forgive me; I have done wrong! Let us be friends again!"

There was a gentle emphasis on the word "friends" that was irresistible. He took her hand in silence, and after a pressure that was almost imperceptibly returned, let it go again, and they walked on together; but there was very little more said between them till they returned to the settlement.

This had happened one afternoon towards the middle of September, and two days later their delightful companionship came suddenly to an end, and the bond that existed between them was severed in a moment without warning, as a nerve thrilling with pleasure might be cut by an unexpected blow with a knife.

On the 16th of September the *Orion* returned from Australia. She touched the earth shortly after midday, and before sunset the *Azrael*, the vessel in which Michael Roburoff had gone to America, also returned, but without her commander. Her lieutenant, however, brought a despatch from him, which he delivered at once to Natas, who, immediately on reading it, sent for Tremayne.

It evidently contained matters of great importance, for they remained alone together discussing it for over an hour. At the end of that time Tremayne left the Master's house and went to look for Arnold. He found him just helping Natasha out of a skiff at a little landing-stage that had been built out into the lake for boating purposes. As soon as greetings had been exchanged, he said:

"Natasha, I have just left your father. He asked me, if I saw you, to tell you that he wishes to speak to you at once."

"Certainly," said Natasha. "I hope you have not brought bad news home from your travels. You are looking very serious about something," and without waiting for an answer, she was gone to obey her father's summons.

As soon as she was out of earshot Tremayne put his arm through Arnold's, and drawing him away towards a secluded portion of the shore of the lake, said:

"Arnold, old man, I have some very serious news for you. You must prepare yourself for the severest strain that, I believe, could be put on your loyalty and your honour."

"What is it? For Heaven's sake don't tell me that it has to do with Natasha!" exclaimed Arnold, stopping short and facing round, white to the lips with the sudden fear that possessed him. "You know——"

"Yes, I know everything," replied Tremayne, speaking almost as gently as a woman would have done, "and I am sorry to say that it has to do with her. I know what your hopes have been with regard to her, and no man on earth could have wished to see those hopes fulfilled more earnestly than I have done, but——"

"What do you mean, Tremayne? Speak out, and let me know the worst. If you tell me that I am to give her up, I tell you that I am——"

"'That I am an English gentleman, and that I will break my heart rather than my oath'—that is what you will tell me when I tell you that you must not only give up your hopes of winning Natasha, but that it is the Master's orders that you shall have the *Ithuriel* ready to sail at midnight to take her to America to Michael Roburoff, who has written to Natas to ask her for his wife."

Arnold heard him out in dazed stupified silence. It seemed too monstrous, too horrible to be true. The sudden blow had stunned him. He tried to speak, but the words would not come. Tremayne, still standing with his arm through his, felt his whole body trembling, as though stricken with some sudden palsy. He led him on again, saying in a sterner tone than before:

"Come, come! Play the man, and remember that the work nearest to your hand is war, and not love. Remember the tremendous issues that are gathering to their fulfilment, and the part that you have to play in working them out. This is not a question of the happiness or the hopes of one man or woman, but of millions, of the whole human race. You, and you alone, hold in your hands the power to make the defeat of the League certain."

"And I will use it, have no fear of that!" replied Arnold, stopping again and passing his hand over his eyes like a man waking from an evil dream. "What I have sworn to do I will do; I am not going back from my oath. I will obey to the end, for she will do the same, and what would she think of me if I failed! Leave me alone for a bit now.

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old man. I must fight this thing out with myself, but the *Ithuriel* shall be ready to start at twelve."

Tremayne saw that he was himself again, and that it was better that he should do as he said, so with a word of farewell he turned away and left him alone with his thoughts. Half way back to the settlement he met Natasha coming down towards the lake. She was deadly pale, but she walked with a firm step, and carried her head as proudly erect as ever. As they met she stopped him and said:

"Where is he?"

Tremayne's first thought was to try and persuade her to go back and leave Arnold to himself, but a look at Natasha's white set face and shining eyes warned him that she was not in a mood to take advice, and so he told her, and without another word she went on swiftly down the path that led to the lake.

CHAPTER LV.

Love and Duty.

The brief twilight of the tropics had passed before Arnold reached a grove of palms on the western shore of the lake towards which he had bent his steps when he left Tremayne. He walked with loose, aimless strides, now quickly and now slowly, and now stopping to watch the brightening moon shining upon the water.

He caught himself thinking what a lovely night it would be to take Natasha for a row, and then his mind sprang back with a jerk to the remembrance of the horrible journey that he was to begin at midnight—to take Natasha to another man, and leave her with him as his wife.

No, it could not be true. It was impossible that he should have fought and triumphed as he had done, and all for this. To give up the one woman he had ever loved in all his life, the woman he had snatched from slavery and degredation when not another man on earth could have done it.

What had this Roburoff done that she should be given to him for the mere asking? Why had he not come in person like a man to woo and win her if he could, and then he would have stood aside and bowed to her choice. But this curt order to take her away to him as though she were some piece of merchandise—no, if such things were possible better that he had never——

"Richard!"

He felt a light touch on his arm, and turned round sharply. Natasha was standing beside him. He had been so engrossed by his dark thoughts that he had not heard her light step on the soft sward, and now he seemed to see her white face and great shining eyes looking up at him in the moonlight as though there was some mist floating between him and her. Suddenly the mist seemed to vanish. He saw tears under the long, dark lashes, and the sweet red lips parted in a faint smile.

Lose her he might to-morrow, but for this one moment she was his and no other man's, let those who would say nay. That instant she was clasped helpless and unresisting in his arms, and her lips were giving his back kiss for kiss. Wreck and chaos might come now for all he cared. She loved him and had given herself to him, if only for that one hour.

After that he could plunge into the battle again, and slay and spare not—yes, and he would slay without mercy. He would hurl his lightnings from the skies, and where they struck there should be death. If not love and life then hate and death—it was not his choice. Let those who had chosen see to that; but for the present love and life were his, why should he not live. Then the mad, sweet delirium passed, and saner thoughts came. He released her suddenly, almost brusquely, and said with a harsh ring in his voice:

"Why did you come? Have you forgotten what so nearly happened the day before yesterday?"

"No, I have not forgotten it. I have remembered it, and that is why I came to tell you—what you know by this time."

Her face was rosy enough now, and she looked him straight in the eyes as she spoke, proud to confess the mastery that he had won.

"Now listen," she went on, speaking in a low, quick, passionate tone. "The will of the Master must be done. There is no appeal from that either for you or me. He can dispose of me as he chooses, and I shall obey, as I warned you I should when you first told me that you should win me if you could.

"Well, you have won me so far as I can be won. I love you, and I have come to tell you so before the shadow falls between us. And I have come to tell you that what you have won shall belong to no one else. I will obey my father to the letter, but the spirit is my affair. Now kiss me again, dear, and say good-bye. We have had our glimpse of Heaven, and this is not the only life."

For one more brief moment she surrendered herself to him again. Their lips met and parted, and in an instant she had slipped out of his arms and was gone, leaving him dazed with her beauty and her winsomeness.

An hour later he walked back to the settlement looking five years older than he had done a couple of hours before, but with his nerves steady and with the light of a solemn resolve burning in his eyes. He went straight to the *Ithuriel*, and made a minute personal inspection of the whole vessel, inside and out. He saw that every cylinder was charged, and that there was an ample supply of spare ones and ammunition on board, including a number of his new fire-shells. Then he went to Lieutenant Marston's quarters, and told him to have the crew in their places by half-past eleven, and this done, he paid a visit to the Master to report all ready.

Natas received him as usual, just as though nothing out of the common had happened, and if he noticed the change that had come over him, he made no sign that he did so. When Arnold had made his report, he merely said:

"Very good. You will start at twelve. The Chief has told you the nature and purpose of the voyage you are about to make, I presume?"

He bowed a silent affirmative, and Natas went on:

"The Chief and Anna Ornovski will go with you as witnesses for Michael Roburoff and Natasha, and the Chief will be provided with my sealed orders for your guidance in the immediate future. The rendezvous is a house on one of the spurs of the Alleghany Mountains. What time will it take to reach there?"

"The distance is about seven thousand miles. That will be from thirty to thirty-five hours' flight according to the wind. With a fair wind we shall reach the Alleghanies a little before sunrise on the 18th."

"Then to make sure of that, if possible, you had better start an hour earlier. Natasha is making her preparations, and will be on board at eleven."

"Very well; I will be ready to start then," replied Arnold, speaking as calmly and formally as Natas had done. Then he saluted and walked out.

When he got into the open air he drew a deep breath. His teeth came together with a sharp snap, and his hands clenched. So it was true, then, this horrible thing, this sacrilege, this ruin, that had fallen upon his life and hers. Natas had spoken of giving her to this man as quietly as though it had been the most natural proceeding possible, an understood arrangement about which there could be no question. Well, he had sworn and he would obey, but there would be a heavy price to pay for his obedience.

He did not see Natasha again that night. When the *Ithuriel* rose into the air she was in her cabin with the Princess, and did not appear during the voyage save at meals, when all the others were present, and then she joined in the conversation with a composure which showed that, externally at least, she had quite regained her habitual self-control.

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Arnold spent the greater part of the voyage in the deck-saloon with Tremayne, talking over the events of the war, and arranging plans of future action. By mutual consent the object of their present voyage was not mentioned. As Arnold was more than two months and a half behind the news, he found not a little relief in hearing from Tremayne of all that had taken place since the recapture of the *Lucifer*. With a portion of this the reader has already been made acquainted, and the rest may be given here in the Chief's own words as he told it to Arnold in the deck-saloon after breakfast on the morning of the 17th.

"You know, of course, of that mysterious movement which has been taking place for many months past now all over the East. Well, as the Americans say, the fall of Constantinople brought that to a head, and with almost miraculous rapidity too. By some means or other the Sultan, Mohammed Reshad, as fierce an old fire-eater as ever smelt powder, managed to escape from the city before the French and Russians got in.

"He got on board one of the Turkish ships that went to the Nile with Beresford, in disguise, and was landed in Egypt with the Turkish troops before the battle, without anyone knowing who he was, and he went straight to Cairo. About a week after he got there, the great mosque was crammed to suffocation by a vast crowd of Turks and Arabs. When prayers were over who should enter the pulpit but Sultan Mohammed, arrayed in his sacerdotal robes as the Sheik-ul-Islam, or Commander of the Faithful. Two of the muftis unfolded the Black Banner of the Prophet behind him, and then he began to preach the Holy War.

"I needn't tell you what inflammable stuff these Moslems are made of when it is a matter of religion. The fall of Constantinople had roused them almost to madness, and a week after that speech the whole Moslem world was in a blaze. You know how miraculously news travels among Orientals and Arabs. The telegraph had something to do with it, of course, but by whatever means it was accomplished, every Moslem capable of pulling a trigger was up in arms, from Morocco to the Ganges, in less than ten days after the Tecbir sounded in the streets of Cairo.

"Then came a series of wholesale butcheries. I believe every male Christian in Northern Africa was slaughtered within a week. The Moors and Arabs settled what French garrisons had been left in Algiers, the Turks turned on the British in Egypt, outnumbering them, as they did, a good hundred to one, and killed them to a man. By this time the flame had spread to India. Nearly all the British troops had been withdrawn as soon as it was clearly seen that Russia would have to be fought, not on Indian but on British soil, but what were left have never been heard of since.

"That, for the present at any rate, has been the end of British rule in India. What happened after that, or what is happening now, it is impossible to say with any degree of precision. Communications between East and West have been completely stopped for the last three weeks or so. No ships have come through the Suez Canal, and as every available vessel in the Mediterranean Squadron, or rather what was left of it after the big battle in the Bay of Aboukir, has been ordered to Gibraltar, so as to be handy for home defence if needed, nothing is known beyond a rumour that the Turks have blown up several vessels in the Canal and completely blocked it. If there are any garrisons left at Suez Suakim, or Aden, they are completely surrounded, and, a's all the telegraph wires and cables have been cut, there is very little probability of any news reaching them.

"Before I left Australia the other day, however, I heard news which, if it is true, as it probably is, means nothing more nor less than a recurrence of what happened in the days of Ghenghis Khan, when the Tartars and Mongols swept Asia from east to west as clean as a chess-board.

"The news was brought by a tea-ship from Shanghai to Melbourne. There was not much of it because she had left

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50	Cash Prizes of £2 each	100 0 0
300	Ladies' Sterling Silver Watches, value 30/- each	450 0 0
300	Cash Prizes of £1 each	300 0 0
700	Gents' Umbrellas, value 15/- each	525 0 0
700	Ladies' Umbrellas, value 15/- each	525 0 0
300	Silver-plated Cruets, value 10/- each	150 0 0
500	Ladies' Gun-metal Watches, value 10/- each	250 0 0
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WATSON'S MATCHLESS CLEANSER
Is full-weight 1-lb. Tablets. Sold by all Grocers, Oilmen, &c., throughout United Kingdom

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in a hurry, but what there was was terribly to the point. All the millions of China are on the war-path; the Manchu dynasty has been overthrown, and the supreme power is in the hands of a Buddhist priest, who claims to be a re-incarnation of Buddha, and who is worshipped almost as a god by every Buddhist throughout the East.

"Japan, too, has suddenly cast off her new Christianity and European civilisation, torn up her ready-made constitution, and followed the priests of her old religion to the feet of the new Buddha. As China and Japan have both powerful fleets and almost innumerable armies, I expect the next definite news we shall get will be of a descent on India, where the Moslems will be cutting Buddhist throats wholesale.

"There will be some tremendous fighting between them and the Buddhists, and after that probably a descent on Eastern Europe by the victors. So far as European civilisation is concerned that will be the beginning of chaos, unless the Anglo-Saxon race rises to the occasion and stands between the world and another Oriental conquest."

"I don't think there is very much fear of that," said Arnold, as Tremayne stopped speaking. "I believe there is plenty of grit left in the Anglo-Saxon yet, and when he once clearly sees that either he or the Mongol or Moslem, as the case may be, has got to possess the earth, he will fight as long as he can put an army in the field.

"Added to that I believe the Moslems will render a pretty good account of the Chinese and Japs before they get very far West. There may not be so many of them, but they're soldiers to a man, and I don't expect we shall have many of the others to reckon with by the time they have done with them. Can you tell me now what the prospects of carrying out this great Federation scheme of yours are?"

"Of course, I can only give you a rough estimate, but I think I can say that, thanks to the marvellous organisation of the Brotherhood, which, of course, has been placed entirely at my disposal by Natas, the success of the scheme is practically assured so far as the vast majority of the industrial classes is concerned, and I needn't say that if we have them the so-called upper and middle classes must either join us or be crushed.

"The fact is that those who turn the world's raw material into available wealth are heartily sick of being manipulated by the capitalists. Without the war, and without the threatened extinction of Britain as a Power, they might not have risen for another hundred years, if they had ever risen at all; but now, you see, it is a question not only of an economic revolt, but also of breaking the power of the League or becoming subject to it.

"As for America, the capitalist and his very humble servant, the professional politician, have between them reduced things to such a state of political and economic rottenness that the moment we proclaim a general Federation of the Anglo-Saxon peoples and declare war on the World, the League, and the Almighty Dollar, industrial America will rise to a man, and that colossal sham, the United States Government, will collapse like a broken bubble."

About eleven, on the night of the 17th, Tremayne went to his cabin, and Arnold told the man on the look-out to go below until he was called. Then he took his place, and remained alone with his thoughts as the *Ithuriel* sped on her way a thousand feet above the deserted waters of the Atlantic, until the dark mass of the American Continent loomed up in front of him to the westward.

As soon as he sighted land he went aft to the wheel-house, and slightly inclined the air-planes, causing the *Ithuriel* to soar upwards until the barometer marked a height of six thousand feet. At this elevation he passed over the mouth of the Chesapeake and across Virginia, and a little more than an hour before sunrise the *Ithuriel* sank to the earth on one of the spurs of the Alleghanies, in sight of a lonely weather-board house, in one of the windows of which three lights were burning in the form of a triangle.

(To be continued.)

A WORD TO HUSBANDS.

ARE YOU BOILED— OR ROASTED?

That is the only way to make some men go down—cook them! But then there's a knack in cooking, to have it done just right. There is a splendid little book called

"HOW TO COOK HUSBANDS,"

By Elizabeth Strong Worthington.

It should be read by everyone. You will be amused, entertained. There are charming pictures in it by Lawson Wood. Prettily bound in cloth. On sale everywhere 1s., or we will send it by post on receipt of 1s. 2d.

C. Arthur Pearson Ltd.,
18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

CAMPAIGNING WITH THE BOERS.

Pictures of Travel, Sport and Adventure.

By GEORGE LACY ("The Old Pioneer"), Author of "Liberty and Law." "Pioneer Hunters, Traders and Explorers of South Africa," etc. Demy 8vo, cloth, with about fifty illustrations, price 15s.

All eyes are turned at the present moment to South Africa. In Mr. Lacy's book you will find a chapter on "Hunting in the Amaswazi and Gaza Countries," "An Account of Campaigning in the Basuto Country," "Sport and Adventure in Natal," "Christmas Days in South Africa," "Trade and Sport in the Orange Free State and the Transvaal," "Visits to the Diamond Fields," etc., etc.

C. ARTHUR PEARSON Ltd., HENRIETTA STREET, W.C.

What's This?

A magnificent Grand Piano, a Ten Pound Note, a hundred Pearson's Stereoscopes, and Gold-plated Pencil Cases offered for finding out in what advertisement this appears.

SEE THIS WEEK'S

"Pearson's Weekly."

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A REGULAR CORKER

PEARSON'S WONDERFUL TALKING PUZZLE

IT'S HARD TO HOLD A GOOD THING DOWN.

WE CAN'T STOP THE RUSH.

HAVE YOU GOT ONE?

£100 in PRIZES.

EVERYONE HAS AN EQUAL CHANCE.

GET ONE TO-DAY.

SOLD AT ALL BOOKSTALLS AND NEWSAGENTS.

. . . PRICE . . .

ONE SHILLING.

POST FREE, 1s. 1½d. DIRECT FROM US.

Mark your envelope "TALKING PUZZLE," and address it to

C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., HENRIETTA STREET, LONDON.

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The Brain Gymnasium.

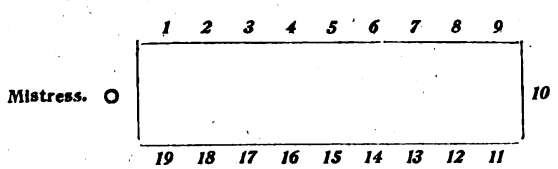
THE competitions in our Christmas number have met with such a hearty welcome from my readers, that I have decided to inaugurate on this page, under the title, "The Brain Gymnasium," a series of puzzles calculated to occupy the attention of the competitors, with interest and profit to themselves, during the long winter evenings. Many of the tasks set will be comparatively easy of solution, while others will be designed with a view to taxing the abilities of the most proficient in this direction.

In each of the competitions a prize of ten shillings will be awarded to the sender of the first correct solution dealt with, and to the sender of the next five correct ones will be presented, in the case of the odd number competitions, one of our silver pencil cases, and, in the case of the even number competitions, a copy of a popular six-shilling novel.

All solutions must be written on separate postcards, and must reach the Editor, SHORT STORIES, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by Monday, January 15th, 1900. Mark the postcards "Brain Gymnasium, No. 7," "Brain Gymnasium, No. 8," etc., according to the number of the competition of which the solution is sent.

No. 7.

NINETEEN girls and their mistress sat down at a table for refreshment thus:



At the end of the repast it was decided that every seventh person should leave the room, and the last one remaining should discharge the bill. How did the girls arrange so that the mistress was left last in the room?

No. 8.

MY 1 2 3 4 5 is to make an impression; my 4 1 3 5 2 is a hamper; my 4 3 5 2 1 is to provide; and my 5 1 3 4 2 is to repeat.

What am I?

No. 9.

To a certain number, add two-thirds of it three times in such a manner that a word is represented in twelve different ways.

No. 10.

REARRANGE the following vertical lines so that a well-known proverb can be read horizontally:

E D E R O V Y
A I G S S H H
Y D D A E A N
R A V Y N E M
S U H H R I O

No. 11.

FOUR boys, **A, B, C,** and **D,** had a certain number of marbles equally divided. A like number was afterwards given to them in the following proportions: **A** received half, **B** received half of the remainder, **C** got a fifth of what **A** and **B** had, while **D** got a quarter of what **B** and **C** received. After playing, it was found that **A** had won two-fifths of **B's** marbles, half of **C's**, and all of **D's**. **B** possessed the remainder, which were just a third of what **A** had. How many did each have at the commencement?

SHORT STORIES ADVERTISEMENT RATES.

Single column, per inch, per insertion	£0	10	0
Double " " "	1	0	0
Full page inside, facing page of matter, either white paper or 2nd or 3rd page of cover, or back page, per insertion	10	0	0
Half-page " "	5	0	0
Quarter-page " "	2	10	0
Eighth-page " "	1	5	0
Front page, whole " "	12	10	0
" half	6	5	0

All spaces above one-eighth of a page are charged at per page rate.

Series discount: 5 per cent. for 13, 10 per cent. for 26, 15 per cent. for 52 insertions.

Black blocks are charged 25 per cent. extra. All advertisements are subject to approval. All copy must be sent in by Noon on Tuesday, Jan. **9th**, if intended for the issue on sale Jan. **23rd**, and dated Jan. **27th**. The Proprietors reserve the right to hold over or suspend the insertion of any advertisement without prejudice to other insertions on order. All communications should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, "Pearson's Weekly" Offices, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Printed and Published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON, LTD., at Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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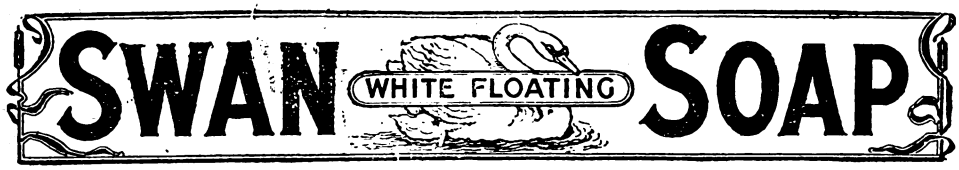
Never Wash Your Face!

with coarse adulterated soap. The secret of a fresh clear complexion consists in using an absolutely pure soap made of the highest-class ingredients.

Never wash dainty fabric with coarse adulterated soap. If you wish to make your expensive fabrics last twice as long, select a soap that is absolutely pure and made of the highest-class ingredients. Of course, if you use



you **may** wash your face, you **may** wash dainty fabric with perfect safety; for SWAN White Floating SOAP is made of the purest and sweetest vegetable oils and fats obtainable, and is specially prepared for washing dainty fabric, for the toilet and the bath.

A Purer Soap is beyond the Art of Soapmaking.

LEVER BROTHERS LIMITED. SOAPMAKERS TO THE QUEEN. PORT SUNLIGHT, CHESHIRE.

KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR.

KAPUTINE

SAFE REMEDY CURES

HEADACHE and NEURALGIA

IMMEDIATELY,

And is sold by all leading Chemists in Packets of 18 Doses, 1s.

To ANYONE HAVING THE LEAST DIFFICULTY, it will be sent post free for 12 Stamps by "KAPUTINE Ltd.," Huddersfield; or, on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope, A. M. Kaputine, Huddersfield, you will receive a free sample.

The fact that "KAPUTINE" is recommended by many leading Medical Men, and is used in National Hospitals and Infirmaries proves that it is THE, THE recognised SAFE REMEDY FOR HEADACHES.

Refuse Substitutes and demand "KAPUTINE," the Safe Remedy. There is no substitute "LIKE IT"; nothing "AS GOOD"; nothing "SIMILAR."

KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR.

When Buying a Cheap Bicycle,

look at the tyres. If they are not

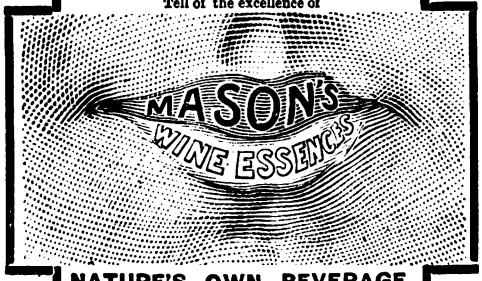
DUNLOP TYRES

the machine is not cheap at any price.

The DUNLOP PNEUMATIC TYRE COMPANY Ltd., Alma Street, Coventry;
160 to 166 Clerkenwell Road, London, E.C.
Branches:—Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Nottingham, Manchester, Glasgow, Dublin, &c.

THOUSANDS OF LIPS

Tell of the excellence of



NATURE'S OWN BEVERAGE.
NON-INTOXICATING.

MASON'S WINE ESSENCES become famous wherever they go. They are pronounced The Ideal by all who try them.

6D. BOTTLE makes 60 GLASSES of the most Delicious Wine. Exquisite flavour and absolute purity. Suitable for all ages. Sample Bottle, post free, 9 stamps.

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SPECIAL OFFER.
Until December 31st, every purchaser of a Sample Bottle of Wine Essence will be presented with a Sample Bottle of our COFFEE ESSENCE and a MONEY BOX.

NEWBALL & MASON, NOTTINGHAM,
Makers of MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS
Agents Wanted.

"WORTH A GUINEA A BOX."

BEECHAM'S PILLS

FOR ALL

BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS,
Sick Headache, Constipation, Wind and Pains in Stomach, Impaired Digestion, Disordered Liver, and Female Ailments.

SALE OVER SIX MILLION BOXES YEARLY.

In Boxes, 1s. 1½d., and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.

Prepared only by the Proprietor,

THOMAS BEECHAM, St. Helens, Lancashire.

Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine Dealers everywhere.

A Magnificent Complexion Guaranteed

By the free use of LILLIE POWDER. It nourishes, heals, soothes, and brings Health and Beauty.

Prepared from the Original Recipe invented by Mrs. Langtry, under the strict supervision of Her Majesty's Perruquier, Mr. W. Clarkson.

Order it of your Chemist and refuse all substitutes, as they may be injurious.

THREE TINTS: BLANCHE, NATURELLE, and RACHEL. Of all Chemists, Hairdressers, Stores, &c.

THE LILLIE SYNDICATE, 3 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

HE GOLDEN GATES." A POWERFUL STORY BY HEADON HILL, IN PEARSON'S WEEKLY

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 576. FOR WEEK ENDING JANUARY 13TH, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

Food and Guy's Tonic.

Guy's Tonic is of the most positive value in all Stomach Disorders, bringing about a better Appetite, greater enjoyment of Food, and accomplishing the Digestion of the latter, both in the Stomach in the first instance and its re-digestion in the Tissues, where Nerve force and Vital power for the Body are created from Food.

The pain and suffering avoided by the use of Guy's Tonic is a strong incentive for you to use it. It prevents those Stomachic Ailments and errors of Digestion which cause Flatulence, Sourness, unpleasant Breath, coated Tongue, Biliousness, Sick Headache, and the like, whilst the relief it affords in Nerve attacks and Neuralgia completes the circle of good work it is in the province of Guy's Tonic to effect.

"Enjoys Food and Sleeps Better."

Mr. H. Dibben, of 5 Fore House, High St., Woolwich, writes:

"I am most particularly pleased with Guy's "Tonic. My wife has suffered from a very severe "form of Indigestion for a long time. Doctors have "done her little or no good, but since taking your "grand Tonic the improvement is really wonderful. "She can now sleep and take her Food with "enjoyment."

Doctors recommend Guy's Tonic.

Edwin H. Stout, Esq., Manager of *The Review of Reviews*, "Mowbray House," Norfolk Street, Strand, London, W.C., writes:

"I often use Guy's Tonic myself with advantage, "and our Family Doctor frequently prescribes it as "one of the best Tonics he can give."

Guy's Tonic is a British Preparation of Simple Vegetable origin. It is employed with excellent results in Hospital Practice, and is widely recommended by Medical Men. A new size (Six Ounce) Bottle of Guy's Tonic, price 1s. 1½d., is now on Sale at all Chemists and Stores.

10/6 **Allen Foster & Co.** 10/6

SOLE MAKERS OF

THE 'ALFOSCO' COSTUMES

BUY DIRECT AT FIRST COST FROM THE LEADING FIRM OF LONDON MANUFACTURERS.

By Parcel's Post. *By Parcel's Post.*

DESIGN No. 144. 10/6. The New Velvet-trimmed Costume. The Best Half-Guinea Costume of the Season produced in the world-famed **Specialite Serge**, also in the **Venetian Cloth**, two grand cloths, unequalled for durability and wear. The colours are fast; Black, Navy, Royal Blue, Dark and Light Grey, Fawn, Brown, Blue-Grey, Oxford Grey, Purple, Myrtle, Reseda, Cardinal, &c. (patterns free). The bodice and sleeves are lined, the collar is of velvet, and the bodice is also effectively trimmed with velvet. The skirt is cut full, with inverted pleats at back, and is made to drape gracefully. **Satisfaction Guaranteed.** Costume complete only **10/6.** Carriage, 6d.; or Skirt alone, **5/6**; carriage, 3d.

DESIGN No. 145. 10/6. Design 145, 10/6, is Allen Foster & Co.'s famous **Reefer Costume.** Thousands of Testimonials speak in most flattering terms of this Coat and Skirt Costume. The coat is cut in the latest approved style. It has a velvet collar and good fancy buttons. The skirt is cut full and fashionably made in the smooth-faced **Venetian Cloth** or **Specialite Serge.** Price **10/6** complete, in either cloth. Carriage, 6d. extra. All Colours—**Patterns Free.**

DESIGN No. 2115. 7/6. A Smart and Up-to-Date Lady's Jacket. Made in a good Beaver President Cloth of excellent quality, handsomely braided on the collar lappels, and down the front and back, cased seams. Price only **7/6,** carriage 6d. extra. Send bust measurement (under arms).

Money returned if not approved.

Design No. 145 **10/6**

NEW YEAR'S GIFT.

ALLEN FOSTER & Co. are presenting a **Diamond Brooch,** consisting of nine beautifully cut Imitation Diamonds surmounted by a heart-shaped Moonstone, in chaste gilt setting, to every purchaser of their goods mentioning this Magazine.

Design No. 144 **10/6**

Design No. 145. 10/6. Design No. 2115. 7/6. Design No. 144. 10/6.

ALL PATTERNS AND SKETCHES POST FREE.

Business hours, 9 to 6. Saturdays, 9 to 1.

A Call Solicited.

ALLEN FOSTER & CO.

The London Manufacturers,

47 GOLDEN LANE, LONDON, E.C.

Advertisement should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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WATSON'S MATCHLESS CLEANSER

Has the Largest Sale of full-weight 1-lb. Tablets in the World, and has proved itself to be one of the Best Soaps ever used.

BIG PRIZE SCHEME

For MARCH, 1900!

10,000 Handsome PRIZES, value **£5,667 6s.**

LIST OF PRIZES:

1	Cash Prize of £50	£50 0 0
10	Pianos, value £40 each	400 0 0
20	American Organs, value £20 each	400 0 0
20	Ladies' Bicycles, value £10 each	200 0 0
50	Jones' Sewing Machines, value £8 each	400 0 0
50	Sellers' Labour-saving Washers, with Rubber Wringer complete, value £3 each	150 0 0
50	Gents' Gold-filled Waltham Lever (Keyless) Watches, value £2 10/- each	125 0 0
50	Cash Prizes of £2 each	100 0 0
300	Ladies' Sterling Silver Watches, value 30/- each ...	450 0 0
300	Cash Prizes of £1 each	300 0 0
700	Gents' Umbrellas, value 15/- each	525 0 0
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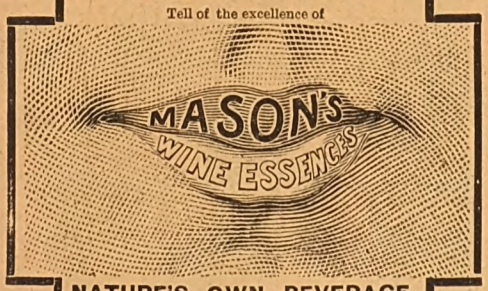
Tell of the excellence of



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NEWBALL & MASON, NOTTINGHAM,

Makers of MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS

Agents Wanted.

THE JOHN NOBLE 10/6 COSTUMES 10/6

Are **PROMPTLY SENT** by Parcels Post direct from the **MANUFACTURERS** to the **WEARERS** at a **LOWER PRICE** than is usually charged for the **MAKING** only.

JOHN NOBLE Ltd. are now conducting the

SALE OF THE CENTURY

Write for a copy of SALE LIST which gives full particulars of a series of

FREE GIFTS

And Illustrations of

WONDERFUL BARGAINS IN **COSTUMES, MANTLES, DRESS FABRICS** AND **DRAPERY GOODS.**

MODEL 1,500.

Our latest triumph is the Best Costume Value of the Century. The Coat has the Latest American Collar, tight fitting back and loose front. Fastens with barrel buttons, but may be worn open or closed. Skirt the latest full shape. Price **10 6**; Carriage 6d. Skirt alone, 5/6; carriage, 5d.

PRETTY "PUSSY" CALENDARS FREE

to all purchasers naming *Short Stories* when writing.

PATTERNS SENT POST FREE

of the two very desirable fabrics in which the Costumes are made:

THE JOHN NOBLE CHEVIOT SERGE AND COSTUME COATING

A FULL DRESS LENGTH of either cloth (6 yards, 52 in. wide) for **7/6**; carriage 8d.

FREE: An embroidered Silk Square presented with each Dress length during the sale.

COLOURS OF COSTUMES: Black, Navy, Brown, Myrtle, Grey, Fawn, and Royal Blue.

SIZES IN STOCK are 34, 36, 38 inches round bust (under arms). Waists, 24, 26, 28 inches; Skirts being 38, 40, 42 inches long in front. Larger or Special sizes made to measure for **1/6** extra.

MOURNING ORDERS sent off within **24 HOURS.**

JOHN NOBLE LTD., BROOK STREET MILLS, MANCHESTER.

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

EPPS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane London.

INVESTED FUNDS

£10,000,000.

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.

FRANCIS RAVENSCROFT, *Manager.*

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travelled up to town with a lot of chaps, and was met at Waterloo by his elder brother Geoffrey, no end of a swell in his way, for he had left the university covered with glory and been appointed assistant private secretary to a Cabinet Minister.

He and Jimmy were to go out to their people for the Christmas holidays. And a fine time they had of it. Geoffrey was inclined to put a lot of "side" on, but his minor knew him too well to be imposed upon. Jim cheeked Geof into rational behaviour, and the two became jolly chums as of old. They had rare fun racing through France to Marseilles, where they caught a steamer which carried them over to the Italian island.

Cagliari is rather a fine old place, but horribly slow for Jim, because his brother soon got a bad attack of "swelled head." His father introduced him to the British Consul and a few local big bodies, who made no end of a fuss over a young man who was so closely in touch with one of the Queen's Secretaries of State.

Geof had no time to waste over a mere schoolboy, so Jim roamed about the quaint streets and market-places alone, and had soon rubbed up a speaking acquaintanceship with all kinds of folk. One of his friends was a funny old man who dressed in seedy black, and said he was a lawyer. He soon found out Jim's love of adventure, and told tempting tales of the wild country, the grand forest, and splendid sport.

In conversation it came out that the forests round about Cagliari were full of holly, and this set Jimmy mad to have a regular old English Christmas, and he bothered his mother and father, until Geof consented to go on a holly-hunting expedition under the guidance of the snuffy old lawyer.

"Hurry up, Geof, old man!"

Jim was wild with excitement. They had had a long tramp and had penetrated fairly into a dense forest, partly under snow, where holly bushes glowing with crimson berries abounded. They had brought a small pony with them, with the intention of bringing him back loaded with woodland spoils. Both brothers were busily hacking at the bushes, when suddenly three men, armed with guns and hunting knives, appeared from behind trees. Geof thought they were forest guards, and remonstrated, when two of them seized him, and the third laid his hand on Jim's collar.

Jim was taken by surprise, but as the men answered gruffly he caught their meaning; and, wrestling himself free, made a slash at his assailant with his small hatchet, at the same time singing out excitedly:

"Look out, Geof; brigands!"

But the men were too quick, and soon had their two English prisoners secure. The snuffy old lawyer had disappeared. With very little ceremony the three men, powerfully built, dirty-looking ruffians, hurried Geof and Jim off, dragging them through the forest to a little hut on the mountain side. Here coarse food was set before them.

"What's that they say?"

Geof Earl had a quaint theory that his University Latin would enable him to make himself understood by Sardinians, and he had found it work tolerably well with the Italian officials, no doubt because they, too, had enjoyed some kind of a classical training. But now, face to face with danger, the Cabinet Minister's important private secretary had to appeal to the small schoolboy brother, who had managed in a few days to pick up a sufficient amount of the native dialect.

"As far as I can make out," said Jim, rather relishing the turning of the tables, "that old Johnny lawyer chap has gone back to collect ransom from the Governor. Look here, Geof, keep a watch upon them, and we'll give 'em the slip."

The bandits looked at the brothers suspiciously, but as they offered no violence, Jim plucked up courage to ask them what they intended to do.

"They will keep us here till our ransom comes. I say, Geof, they want ten thousand lires. Isn't that an awful lot?"

"Four hundred pounds."

"Whew! no idea I was worth so much. But it's all your fault, Geof, for being such a big bug. But, I say, Geof"—Jim's face clouded over, and a scared look came into his eyes—"what if the Dad hasn't got the money with him?"

"Never fear, Jimmy boy, he'll soon get it," and he threw his arm round the youngster's neck. But he, too, looked anxious, though he tried to hide it.

Jim soon recovered, chatting with the bandits in broken Italian.

Jim, wrestling himself free, made a slash at his assailant with his small hatchet.

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and chaffing Geof for being such an important personage. Certainly the bandits had formed an exaggerated idea of Geoffrey Earl's position, and, apparently, their chief reason for detaining Jim was to gain a hold on the elder brother.

As night came on, it grew intensely cold. Warm blankets were handed to the prisoners, and rolled in these, with their feet to the fire, Geof and Jim huddled together on the earthen floor and tried to sleep. For a long time this was no easy matter, but Jim looked on the whole affair in the light of a lark, and, being tired out, dropped off.

It was still quite dark—the blackness before the dawn—when they were roughly awakened. Had the ransom arrived? Jim rubbed his eyes and shivered. It was cold, and no order for release had come. On the contrary, their captors for some reason were hurrying them off again. Horrible pictures came unbidden into Jim's brain, pictures conjured up by hazy recollections of every ghastly brigand and robber tale that he had ever read. As they stumbled out of doors, he clung to Geof, who, with his arm round the youngster's waist, held him up. It was a hurried march, and the brothers silently noticed with alarm as the daylight increased that they were leaving the forest and penetrating the rocky fastnesses of the barren mountains. Jim kept his ears open.

"We are pursued, Geof. I expect it'll be all right."

"Heaven help us," muttered Geof, and he drew Jim closer to him. If they really were pursued by troops then their lives were indeed in danger, for, if pressed too closely, murder might be resorted to by the bandits.

The chief bandit led the way, the two others coming behind their prisoners. It was a long flight, and apparently a perplexing one, for the bandits seemed uncertain as to their movements. Suddenly, while ascending the side of a valley, the leader halted, and made a rapid sign. Geof and Jim were made to lie down behind huge rocks on the mountain side.

Presently they heard the rolling of stones, and then heavy footsteps. Two men appeared lower down the valley coming in the same direction. They were dressed almost exactly like Guiseppe, the bandit leader, and his companions, in hairy, brown homespun, with black felt hats and heavy boots. Each man carried a double-barrelled gun in his hand, and formidable knives in their belts, while large bags hung at their backs—proofs of their illegal calling. These men, who it was now evident were the imaginary pursuers of Guiseppe and his prisoners, ran along the valley for some distance, evidently making for a pass between two crests of a mountain further up.

Quite suddenly, right in front of the banditti, three men in the blue uniforms of the *carabinieri* appeared, barring the path to the pass. The fugitives hesitated, then made a bolt up the mountain side. At the same instant four more military policemen appeared in the opposite direction, by the same way the men had appeared. All this happened within less than a quarter of a mile of the spot where the Englishmen and their captors were biding. Guiseppe made his companions

Then one of the bandits halted, turned about, lifted his gun to his shoulder, there was a puff of smoke and a reverberating report, and one of the soldiers fell back.

creep farther up the mountain side, keeping well covered behind the rocks. He spoke earnestly with his men, and Jim understood that they contemplated tying their arms and covering their heads with a cloak. But the youngster was tremendously excited by this time, and his chief desire was to see the tragedy which he felt was about to be enacted before him.

"We won't submit to be gagged or tied."

"You are at our mercy, remember," whispered Guiseppe; "and it is far wiser to lie quietly back here with this coat over your head."

"No! Leave us free, and we promise not to make a sign or raise a cry."

Guiseppe consulted his men by a glance.

"Come further up."

They put a further distance between them and the bed of the valley; and, when they settled down again, the position of the parties on the opposite side had somewhat changed. The *carabinieri* had concentrated forces, and were rapidly gaining on their quarry. The men of law and order in blue fired, but the bandits bounded up among the rocks. More shots were fired. Then one of the bandits halted, turned about, lifted his gun to his shoulder, there was a puff of smoke and a reverberating report, and one of the soldiers fell back. His comrades ran to support him, and carried him behind a rock, but soon left him. Evidently all was over.

The bandits had taken advantage of the panic to run

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higher up the opposite side of the valley and sought refuge in a small hollow, before which they built up a rampart of stones.

Soon, however, the soldiers began a heavy fire, at the same time cautiously creeping up the mountain behind the cover of the boulders. A brisk return fire was kept up, so the advance was slow, and then ceased.

For a few minutes there was a lull. New tactics were observed. Each side reserved its fire until an incautious movement exposed a cap or a sleeve, when a shot was immediately fired, and more shots aimed at the points where white puffs of smoke could be seen. This lasted for a long time. But the soldiers apparently grew tired, and once more the six remaining men opened a heavy fire and commenced a cautious creeping advance.

The bandits soon understood what was being done, and fired as rapidly as they could. There was a shout, and one soldier fell back behind a boulder. Two men, regardless of their danger, rushed to him. Behind the shelter of the rocks Jim and Geof could see the two good Samaritans busying themselves in dressing the man's wounds, and pouring something out of a black flask down his throat. They propped him up in a safe spot and left him.

There were now only five men to storm the little breastwork high up above them. They preferred to play a waiting game.

Looking down from their quarters, Geof and Jim and their captors could see the soldiers adopt all kinds of means to attract the fire of the enemy. They removed their blue caps, and, placing them on sticks, pushed them just above the rocks.

The caps were immediately pierced by a ball. Then the soldiers gave a shriek, as though one of them had been wounded. But the bandits were not to be drawn. They kept well behind their stone buttresses, and reserved their fire as much as possible. Neither party cared to risk anything.

The unsuspected onlookers, who could see most of the game, felt that if the bandits had sufficient ammunition, they had the best of the position. Night would soon approach, and then they could steal away under cover of the darkness. Meanwhile they held the position, and could easily prevent the soldiers moving. Indeed, retreat seemed almost as dangerous as advance.

Probably the attacking force understood this, and their tactics appeared to induce the besieged to exhaust their ammunition. As matters stood, there seemed to be every chance for the bandits, but the whole aspect of affairs was soon to be changed.

Three more *carabinieri* appeared over the pass. The onlookers could hear loud shouts from the besiegers, who commenced firing at the cavern. They were shouting directions, and the firing was done with the object of pointing out the spot, perhaps of drawing a return fire. The bandits, however, did not reply. Taking the whole scheme in at a glance the new-comers crept along the mountain-side with an upward slant, intending to outflank the bandits. Seeing this, the bandits kept up a slow but well-aimed fire at the advancing men, who were obliged to seek refuge behind rocks, and dash from one to another. The game was up, but it was still an intensely exciting one.

Recognising the danger that threatened them, the two bandits turned all their attention to the latest arrivals, and gradually warming to their work, forgot about the besiegers in front, and exposed themselves. The mistake was at once perceived, and five shots were fired, toppling one of the bandits over. Ringing shouts rent the air, but the second bandit still possessed a double barrelled gun, and he showed his assailants that he knew how to use it. He kept wonderfully cool, firing cautiously, in such a way as to abate the ardour of his enemies.

But though the fight was a slow one, it now could only end in one way, and so the soldiers felt it was useless to expose themselves. However, they were slowly but surely closing in. Soon the men on the upper side of the mountain would command the breastwork, and then would come the end. Having used all his ammunition, the surviving bandit seized his dead friend's gun and discharged the last shot. Folding his arms, he leant back, his right hand clutching his dagger, while he keenly watched the movements of his enemies.

Apparently the soldiers dreaded that the man was reserving his last two or four shots, and so were chary of making a united assault. But the delay told on the bandit's nerves. He gave a cry, tossed one and then the other gun amidst the rocks, and his dagger after them. This done he stood up with folded arms. He was at once covered with six carbines, while two *carabinieri* rapidly advanced towards the bandit, who held out his hands, and hanging down his head, allowed himself to be handcuffed.

The other men then came flocking round, and the watchers saw them gesticulating wildly. This soon ended. Four men were told off to carry the dead, whilst two others quickly improvised a stretcher with the guns and a great-coat and carried off their wounded comrade.

As the sad little troop disappeared over the pass Geoffrey Earl heaved a deep sigh. During the progress of the miniature battle he had been too much interested and excited to think of himself and brother; but now that all was over, that the victorious representatives of civilisation had gone, a feeling of despair came over him, and he could have dashed himself against the rocks or tried to fell one of his captors. But they, too, seemed to be greatly sobered by the tragedy they had witnessed. They talked in whispers, and showed every mark of indecision.

At one moment Jim thought that their turn for slaughter had come. Excitement had kept him up, but now he felt sick, and fell back shuddering. Geof caught him in his arms.

Guiseppe also made a hurried movement to save the youngster, but his foot slipped, his gun fell out of his hands, and went off with a loud report, which was instantly followed by a yell, and one of the bandits rolled over, accidentally shot through the chest. The third man darted forward, and let his gun fall.

Jim struggled free, seized the loaded gun, and yelled out:

"Quick, Geof, collar the other guns," and at the same time he butted Guiseppe, winding and sending him sprawling down the mountain-side, and losing his own equilibrium in the effort. But he scrambled to his feet, and, regaining the gun, hurled it with all his might at the kneeling bandit.

Geoffrey had seized the loaded gun and discharged it, but without effect.

"Let's bolt!"

Jim dashed off in the direction taken by the *carabinieri* followed by Geof and the third bandit, Guiseppe, lame and half stunned, could only join his wounded companion. The two reports had been heard by the military police, and as Geof and Jim ran panting over the rough stony ground the blue uniformed men

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appeared in the distance, running towards them, then dropping on their knees they opened fire. Horrified, Jim and Geoffrey threw up their arms and yelled. But their action must have been misunderstood, for another report followed, and Geof with a groan slipped and fell. Jim, who was some distance ahead, heard the fall, stopped and ran back.

"Go on, Jim. Go away; do as I tell you. Never mind me," cried Geoffrey.

But Jim heeded not, he was by his brother's side.

"Oh! Geof, they've killed you. Where are you hit?"

There was a red stain on the left shoulder and the arm hung helplessly at his side. Jim tried to staunch the blood with his handkerchief, oblivious of all else, when he saw Geof close his eyes and go off in a faint. Jim thought he was dead, and cried aloud:

"Geof, old chap, Geof!"

Meanwhile, the bandit, seeing the return of the *carabinieri*, gave up the chase, and hurried back to help his chief, the turn affairs had taken making it abundantly evident that all their energies must now be concentrated in an effort to save their own skins. The police, apparently realising that something unusual was happening, ceased firing and hurried up. They laid rough hands on despairing Jimmy, who was trying vainly to staunch the blood and call Geoffrey back to consciousness. Recognising that the boy and the wounded man were foreigners, two of the *carabinieri* stayed with them, whilst two others pursued the retreating bandits.

Jim thought he was dead, and cried aloud: "Geof, old chap, Geof!"

It was a long time before Jim could make himself understood, and, in fact, only became intelligible when Geof opened his eyes, after some brandy had been poured down his throat.

It was a terrible journey back, for Geof had to be supported to the high road, a distance of some miles, where they found the dead and wounded *carabinieri* and a clumsy country cart, in which they were all jolted down to Cagliari, the sufferings of his brother during the bumpy ride causing Jim the greatest distress.

Geoffrey had to keep to his bed for a week, but Jim was up and about in a day or two, fussing over his brother, and hurrying off to the Court-house to hear the news. Guiseppe was caught, and the second bandit was brought in. He died very shortly after, and Guiseppe received for his deeds a term of imprisonment which would effectually put a stop to his marauding habits for a very long time to come. The third bandit and the snuffy old lawyer were never seen again, though an hour or two after Jim and Geof had arrived Mr. Earl had received a mysterious letter demanding a ransom for his two sons. The missive came rather too late. Poor old Jimmy. He saw many another mountain battle, though never under such conditions. GEORGE C. ROTHERY.

A SAD experience is that of "Imperita," which is given in a London paper. Wanting a cook's character, she called upon the "reference." The "reference" was found in a darkened room, lying invalided upon a sofa, her eyes covered by blue spectacles. It turned out to be the cook herself, who had engaged the rooms for a week in order to be able to give herself a good character.

AN Irishman meeting a fellow-countryman inquired of him what had become of a mutual friend. "Arrah now, honey," answered the other, "Paddy was condemned to be hanged, but saved his life by dying in prison!"

"SHE told him she wouldn't marry a man who wasn't able to take her to Australia."

"Well, that's what I call a broad hint."

"HARRY, I'm afraid our baby has a contrary disposition."

"He's too young yet to have any characteristics."

"Well, he's always getting ill when we have a ticket for a theatre."

"FATHER," said the boy, with big, serious eyes, "I want to ask you something."

"What is it, my son?" asked the old gentleman, closing his book and looking wise.

"If a monkey wore shoes on his hind feet would they be mittens?"

DR. YOUNG: "My dear, your throat demands better protection from the draughts of the theatre."

Mrs Young: "Yes, darling; I ought to have a three-string pearl necklace for such occasions."

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SUCH LOVE AS THIS.

WHEN I first saw Jim Hicks slouching through the village street I was just as disagreeably impressed and just as ready to endorse the general verdict concerning him as anyone could be.

I was walking with the rector, an old friend of my father's, who had invited me to spend a portion of my summer holiday with him in order that I might quietly pursue my studies for the stiff exam in store for me. I saw this disreputable-looking fellow coming, and I was at first surprised that the rector should greet him so kindly and cheerily as we passed; and, on the other hand, I was not one whit astonished that the fellow made no reply—that was just what I should have expected.

I was about to ask my companion why he troubled to salute the man, when it occurred to me that it was part of his duty and I remained silent. It seemed as though the rector divined my thoughts, for he began to speak on that very subject.

"That young man furnishes a fairly good example of what we may call the tortuousness of human nature," said the Rev. David Lawson. "To all appearances, he is a black sheep—not a very black one, perhaps, but one that it is apparently impossible to make white. Nothing touches him; punishment and kindness are useless. Yet I feel that there is good in him, for at one time he was different."

"What caused the change?" I asked.

"Love has been the chief cause of two changes in him, John," returned my father's friend. "Love turned him from a state similar to that in which you now see him and made him a respectable member of society; and a love disappointment drove him back again. I believe I am the only one in the place who says a good word for him or to him, and it isn't only duty that impels me. I believe *she* would do the same, but he wouldn't let her speak to him now."

I was curious to know the circumstances; and thus it came about that I heard the story of Jim Hicks when that story was only partly unfolded, while the conclusion came within my own experience.

Four years previously the rector had made a determined effort to reform some of the youths of the village, who were fast becoming a danger to the little community. Jim Hicks, then about nineteen, was the worst; he was a thorough "rough" and the leader in all the mischief and law-breaking. In furtherance of his plan, Mr. Lawson enlisted the services of some young girls who taught in the Sunday-school and otherwise assisted in parish work.

Dora Forbes was one of those who entered fully into the spirit of the idea; the village had declined in respectability during the past year or two, and if it were not to go still lower, the young fellows must be taken in hand. So she took a large part in the work, and it was she who first spoke to Jim and, to the general surprise, induced him to come to a social meeting.

That was only the second social that had been held and it was a grand success; they had songs, recitations, readings and friendly chat, and they actually induced Jim to sing a refined song that he had learnt while at school.

Everybody was delighted, Jim's example was catching; the meetings were well attended, and the young fellows were occasionally present at church instead of loafing round the public house or tossing for coins in out-of-the-way corners.

But the greatest transformation of all was that wrought in the person of Jim Hicks; he was entirely changed before the winter had passed—was sober, industrious and clean in mind and body. Instead of a danger to Northing, he was regarded as one of the coming men.

Thus two years went by, and at the end of that time Hicks had saved enough to start in a small way of business as a jobbing carpenter in Northing. He had been brought up to that line, and as the village carpenter had died, there was a chance for a steady man. It was also Jim's idea to take a small farm later on and work the two businesses together, as a man in a neighbouring village was doing with much profit to himself.

In six months, Hicks, who showed considerable enterprise had acquired a good connection, and was even blossoming into a small builder; then came the chance of carrying out his plan of taking a farm, for one was to be vacant at Michaelmas and he had the first offer.

All the village was on the the tip-toe of expectation; Hicks would want a wife to help him with that farm, and there was more than one girl in Northing who would have said "Yes" with great willingness had Jim asked her to share his lot. But soon a rumour began to be spread about—a rumour that was confirmed very quickly; Hicks had asked Dora Forbes to marry him, and she had declined.

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Northing was indignant with Jim for his presumption and quite endorsed the decision of Miss Forbes. She was the only daughter of old Captain Forbes and would come into a lot of money; she was a lady, and, therefore, far above Hicks in station. However could he have supposed that she would accept? He must have been mad!

Probably he was—mad in love. Neither the good people of the village nor Dora could see the working of the man's mind. The interest which the girl had shown in him had appeared in a different light to each of them; to her it had been zeal in a good cause, but to him it had been due to a liking—to affection—for him, and during all the intermediate time he had been influenced by the idea of one day being able to ask for her hand, so that he might possess it as well as her heart.

He was conscious that there was a difference in their positions, but he did not realise the full extent of that difference; he imagined that the kind-hearted old man, as the Captain was known to be, would be satisfied with the two facts that he was getting on and that the young people loved each other. That there would be any difficulty with Dora herself never occurred to him.

When the chance came of renting the farm, he believed that the time had arrived to speak out, and he sought an opportunity of telling Dora boldly of his heart's desire and asking her to be his wife in a formal manner. His first idea was to go to the house and see her, but in the end his courage failed him and he watched her as she went for a walk and followed her.

He waited till she had reached a secluded spot and then approached and began to plead his cause. The first doubt that had ever crossed his mind arose as he saw the continually increasing look of astonishment on her face. He had expected to see quite another expression on those dearly-loved features, and a cold chill struck his heart. Could it mean that she did not love him? Had all this interest in him been a mere sham?

Dora was very gentle with him; she recognised the blunder he had committed and understood quite well the disappointment that the truth must cause him and she was sorry for him. But it was necessary to speak plainly and disabuse him.

"I am extremely sorry, Hicks," she said frankly, "but there is some terrible mistake. I have never entertained towards you any stronger feeling than that of a desire to see you a credit to yourself and to our village. What you ask is an impossibility. There are others——"

Hicks shook his head impatiently; his heart was devoted to her and there was no place in it for any one of the "others." He was turning to go when she held out her hand to him, and involuntarily he seized it and raised it to his lips.

That was the turning point in the career of Jim Hicks; from that day his habits changed and he relapsed into his former style of living. He renounced his claim to the farm, neglected his work to such an extent that he became unreliable and gradually lost his connection, and, in short, he became the loafer of two years before.

From bad he went to worse; there were rumours, as time went on, that he had been mixed up in some of the burglaries and petty thefts of which the people of Northing and the surrounding districts had had to complain, but no direct evidence could be produced against him. The rector sighed in secret every time he saw Hicks, for it really seemed that he was a hopeless case.

Dora Forbes' marriage to the son of a neighbouring squire put the finishing touch to Hicks' backsliding, although in the general opinion Hicks did not require any pushing along the down grade—he was going quite fast enough of his own accord. After a few more months, during which the conduct of Hicks appeared to be more outrageous than ever, his misdoings culminated in the commission of a crime for which he was sent to prison for six months.

The offence with which Hicks was charged was that of assaulting James Munro, the only son of the one medical man in Northing; he had attacked this young fellow while the latter was returning home late at night and had dealt him a severe blow on the back of the head, rendering him unconscious. The object of this attack was undoubtedly robbery, but the evil doer had been disturbed by the approach of a labourer who had recognised him in the moonlight and had given the information which led to Hicks' arrest.

At the assizes Hicks had pleaded "Not Guilty" in a sullen manner, but had made no further attempt at defence. When the sentence was pronounced, most people thought that he had got off lightly and predicted a great increase of crime on every circuit where that judge was sent.

He had been released only a few days when I saw him in the village street. The story, as related by my friend, impressed me in a way that I could not explain, and whenever I went out I caught myself continually awtching for the appearance of Jim Hicks. The conclusion of the story came sooner than was anticipated.

The people of Northing strongly believed that Hicks had a grudge against Dora Forbes, as they continued to call her, for having rejected him and married young Marsh. Presumably they cherished this notion because it is a common failing with human beings to wish evil to those who have not acted just as they are desired to act. but it was a noticeable fact that Hicks was often seen within easy distance of the house occupied by the Marshes, and occasionally dogged her footsteps when she came into the village street.

It was one night during the last week of my stay with the Rev. David Lawson when the final chapter was unfolded. It was rather a dark night, and my friend and I went out about nine o'clock for half an hour's stroll to refresh us before retiring for the night—a custom which the rector had followed for many years. We walked unintentionally in the direction of Mr. Marsh's residence, through some quiet lanes, and on coming within sight of it the rector casually remarked that the Marshs were either out or gone to bed, as there were no lights visible.

The house lay in a somewhat lonely position. There was nothing remarkable about it and I have often wondered why we stood looking at it; I only know that we did so stand for a couple of minutes before turning to retrace our steps to the rectory.

We had covered about half the distance, when the rector stopped and called my attention to a particular star; this led us to turn for the purpose of observing others and we noticed a red glare that made us both ejaculate "Fire!"

"Yes, there is a fire somewhere, and I believe it's at the Marshes!" cried Mr. Lawson. "We must hurry back and see what is to be done. Come along, quick!"

Sure enough Mr. Marsh's house was in flames. Some of the villagers had seen it before we had, for when we arrived we found a dozen people there and we learnt that the village engine was coming as quickly as it was possible to bring it. The house was well alight and it

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was a fortunate thing, said the villagers, that no one was at home.

Three or four of the men were making a half-hearted attempt to extinguish the flames by throwing pailfuls of water on the lower part of the building, but the devouring element had obtained such a hold on the ground floor that the chance of preventing the complete destruction of the building was very remote.

Those who were unable to assist employed their time in watching the progress of the flames and in speculating upon the probable cause of the outbreak. The general opinion was that a light had been left burning and had been overturned by the cat, and one of the two women who had arrived on the scene was bravely imparting this view to the rector when her remarks were cut short by a loud shout.

"Look, look! Hicks!" came from three persons at once.

We all looked up and there, through one of the windows of the upper floor and plainly visible in the light of the flames, we saw the figure of Jim Hicks. In the minds of those present the cause of the conflagration was made quite clear by this apparition; Hicks had entered the building for some nefarious purpose, knowing that the inmates were absent, and had in some way overturned the supposed light. That he was still in the burning building was explained by pointing out that he had not noticed what he had done and had been surprised by the flames while he was still hunting for money and valuables on the upper floor.

Both Mr. Lawson and I remembered that we had not noticed any light in the house, but it was quite possible that there had been one in the back room. However, it was useless to make conjectures as to the cause of the fire; it was our duty to do what we could in order to save a fellow creature from an awful death or from terrible injuries, even though that fellow creature was so unworthy a man as Jim Hicks.

The engine came up at a run and everyone set to work with a will. But we had scarcely made a beginning ere a frenzied cry close behind us told us that Dora Marsh had arrived and was calling loudly for her child. Then, like a flash the truth was made known to us, although none of us could ever explain exactly in what manner; the husband and wife had gone on a visit, leaving the child at home in charge of the servant, and the latter had put the child to bed and gone out. The terrified and weeping girl was now standing near us, bewailing her neglect of duty.

All this took less time to happen than it does to relate. I saw the mother make a frantic dash for the purpose of entering the burning building, and I helped Mr. Lawson to hold her back; her own death would have been almost certain had she been permitted to enter. Her husband, white as death had gone round to see if there was any chance of making a dash for the bed-room where the child had been left.

At this moment a wonderful thing happened; literally from a fiery furnace there staggered a man carrying a burden wrapped in a blanket. When he reached the open he stumbled a few paces and then fell flat on the ground, from which still perilous position he was quickly dragged by willing hands and strong arms. The man was Jim Hicks, severely burnt; the burden was Dora's child, safe and sound.

Jim was carried tenderly to the nearest house, where he was laid on a couch and everything possible done to soothe his wounds pending the arrival of the doctor, the man whose son he had been punished for attacking. Dora went with him, holding her child tightly to her breast, and her husband quickly followed. It was in the presence of Dora and her husband, the rector and myself, the medical man and the woman who occupied the house, that Jim Hicks regained consciousness and slowly, a few words at a time, told the story of the fire as he knew it—and something else.

The incidents connected with the conflagration were soon related. He was sauntering in the vicinity of the house—he had seen Mr. Lawson and me as we strolled about—when his attention was suddenly attracted by flames shooting up from the ground floor. At first, as he confessed, he had watched the flames with inward satisfaction; he knew that Dora and her husband were out and he had passed the servant in the street an hour previously, and he had pictured to himself the dismay of the Marshes at the destruction of their home. All at once, in the midst of his glee, he remembered that he had not seen the child either with the parents or with the servant; and he also remembered that the baby was usually left at home in charge of the latter and that on more than one occasion he had known her to visit her friends in the village and leave the baby in bed.

Then his old love for Dora, which had been momentarily dominated by fiendish satisfaction, came back in full force and he went into the house to save the child. Not being acquainted with the position of the rooms, he had lost valuable time in searching for it, but had at last succeeded in finding it and had brought it out safely, the brave deed having been performed at terrible cost to himself.

It was all for love of her. And he had done something else, too, for love of her; the crime for which he had been punished had not been committed by him, but he had suffered for it and had refrained from exposing the culprit in order to spare her. That culprit was her brother.

Hicks had seen Tom Forbes strike Munro and kneel down to rifle the young fellow's pocket; he had stopped Tom in his work, and Dora's brother, in his confusion and fear, had confessed that he had given Munro an I. O. U. for a sum of money lost at card-playing which it was impossible for Tom to raise, and he was endeavouring to extricate himself from his difficulty by robbing Munro of the paper. Hicks had released Tom and had returned to the unconscious man in order to render assistance when the labourer had appeared and Hicks had decamped lest he should be accused of the assault. The only thing that had prevented him from telling the truth when arrested was that he wished to spare Dora the disgrace that would fall upon her.

No doubt whatever as to the truth of this confession existed in the minds of any of us who heard it; the doctor had told us quietly that Hicks was dying, and I verily believe that Hicks himself knew it. There was sincerity in every word. And I may say at once that Tom Forbes himself subsequently admitted it.

"I did it for *you*," said Hicks feebly, his eyes fixed upon Dora with an expression of intense love such as I have never beheld before or since. "I would have done anything for you, anything! You taught me what was good, and I longed to have you for my own, to teach me always and to be with me always; and with you by my side I would have been a good man and a great man. There is nothing I wouldn't have done! And when I found I could not have you, it turned me bad. But I never left off loving you!"

He did not utter another word, but he kept his eyes, still with that expression of intense love, fixed upon the woman of his choice until they became glassy in death a few minutes later.

GEO. DAY.

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THE CRUELTY OF A KINDNESS.

JACK MELTON and Granger were always to be seen in deep conversation on the Cape liner *Scot*. Both men were of that Bohemian type that one so frequently meets with in travels, and although it required no very keen eye to pronounce them gentlemen of the first water, their hard hands and heavily lined faces spoke volumes for troubles that had been experienced. Roughing matters on the Rand, however, had certainly increased the attractiveness of the men, if at the expense of hard hands, empty stomachs, and a complete absence of anything approaching feather beds or spring mattresses and the hundred-and-one other little details which can be identified with the most humble of English homes.

From dawn to sunset, from Cape Town to Madeira, Melton and Granger kept constant company. They were called the "unnatural lovers" by some, but in truth they were the most natural of lovers in the whole world for in their rambles for fame and fortune they shared one another's joys and sorrows—in short, by their attachment they fulfilled to the letter that portion of the marriage ceremony which reads: "To have and hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, cherish and to obey, till death do us part, according to God's holy ordinance; and there to I give thee my troth."

The *Scot* carried a full complement of passengers, and as soon as she took up the running and threw out her long stream of jet black smoke in sight of Table Bay preparations were made for drawing up a good programme of sports. Melton and Granger took an active part in the arrangements, and it was the appointment of Melton and myself as joint secretaries that brought me into rather close acquaintance with the pair. I imagine that I played gooseberry to an indecent extent, but I had my excuses—I was anxious to know their wanderings and what sort of luck the Cape had bestowed upon them.

A week or so on a floating hotel, with the constant humming of machinery, the lazy motion of the boat, in congenial and pleasant society, encourages sentiment among young bloods, and makes the old folks wish that old age had been left out of the category of human nature. The *Scot* seemed proud of her human freight and the chief engineer was growled at hourly and daily for putting in two hundred revolutions per minute. It was just the weather and under exactly the circumstances when nobody cares about record-breaking and land-sighting, when quick passages are voted obnoxious and London boards of directors as necessary evils.

We were a happy family on board, well paired on all hands, and when the word was passed that Madeira had been sighted there was much sighing, a good deal of crying and not a few promises. When a mail boat reaches port promises are as thick as the blacks emitted from the ship's funnels. But these rainbow promises are really no more than so many crumbs of comfort; still, they help to make the parting all the easier, and the formality—for such it is—is not without its happy side. The man who is wantonly profuse in his promises ought to sink his credit as much as a tradesman would by uttering a great number of promissory notes, payable at a distant date.

And the woman? Well, she really ought to be a little less ambitious as to what she will do and what she won't, for I have known cases in which such rainbow promises have misled and disheartened men whose after lives have been so much material for table talk scandal.

We disembarked several of our passengers at Madeira, and among those who took their places for a homeward voyage was a very old friend of mine who had been spending a few weeks at the Canary Isles with his beautiful daughter, a charming little woman just out of her 'teens, who had a noble face bedecked with the finest ornament woman can possess—a head of golden hair, which being parted in the middle and brought down in loose waves over the ears, was the perfecting touch to one of the most glorious pictures life was ever breathed into.

But even with sweetly pretty girls one dares to be critical at times, and if every feature and every accessory had to be analysed by the connoisseurs of physical defects, my friend's daughter would not have passed her examination unscathed because of her eyes.

Set under the most perfect of eyebrows and the most luxurious veil of eyelashes, her pale blue eyes always carried a far-away and expressionless look which, to the casual observer merely meant so much coldness of heart, to the friend, slight imperfection of sight; but to her parents and a small circle of friends spelt blindness in its most terrible form.

Only the sightless know the full measure of eternal darkness on this earth. The penalty of the affliction is in no less a degree severe upon the street beggar or the blind minstrel boy than upon those who are well-favoured in other respects; it is sometimes even more terrible but mankind is wont to be more generous with its sympathy where beauty is in distress. Afflictions are looked upon as defects. The afflicted poor may stand at our street corners and hawk their shortcomings to the charitable, but when respectability carries misfortune in its folds its owners are not so apt to air their defects. Sympathy is cheap and not an essential element, so physical defects are hidden as far as possible among the "upper ten."

Painting women in the language of the pen is not an accomplishment of mine, but it would amount to an injustice to call her, my friend's daughter, merely beautiful. To see her was to learn the passion of love.

Such was Trissy—that was her pet name—and a good deal more would be added if Melton or Granger had the penning of this account.

We were not detained long at Madeira, and when we had put to sea again and set course for Southampton I retired in search of the "lovers" to enjoy our customary lounge and smoke on the promenade deck. It was a glorious evening, a slight haze hanging over the ship like so much nuns' veiling; whilst the stars kept up a lively blinking and a full moon and a cloudless sky,

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made the electric lights which studded the ship's bulwarks look like so many farthing dips scattered about the boat.

I found Melton on the promenade deck. He was alone, a somewhat unusual occurrence, and sideling up to him I waited quite five minutes before he noticed my presence. He appeared to be wandering in dreamland, and when he turned towards me and made some passing remark about the weather I was struck with his nervous condition. His quivering lips spoke of some hidden trouble and when a man is in trouble he wants solitude, not sympathy—so unlike a woman. So I drew heavy on my Havanna cheroot, took note of Melton's sigh and said that I would drop across him later in the evening.

"I wish you would come to my cabin," said Melton, "Granger and I have had a little upset and perhaps you can adjust matters a little. When we were at Madeira an awfully pretty girl got on board—you know her, I believe."

"Is *that* the girl you mean?" I asked, as Trissy came walking in our direction. "I thought so. Let me give you an introduction. Permit me to introduce you, Trissy, to a friend of mine, Mr. Melton—Miss Allen. Will you keep Miss Allen company, Melton, whilst I get a few smokes, and have a chat with Granger? Is father quite well, Trissy?"

"Oh, yes. He's in the smoking room I believe."

"Then I will tell him where he can find his little girl," I remarked, without having the least intention of doing so; and, making my way to the lower deck found Granger in his cabin with the inevitable cigarette between his lips, a heavy frown sitting on his brow and a neatly penned letter before him.

"Granger, your lover is on the promenade deck flirting. 'Pon my soul, you two boys will be the talk of the table to-morrow evening. Granger writing neatly and Melton flirting with a girl. Really, it is shocking, old man, and if you value your reputation you will take me on the upper deck at once and insist upon my introducing you to Miss Trissy Allen, that beautiful girl I pointed out to you at Madeira. You must assert your claim to Melton and take him away."

My words did not appear to amuse or even interest Granger. I felt awkward and tried to change the subject, but my conversation was arrested by Granger who swung round in his chair towards me and remarked:

"You needn't change the subject. This attachment of Melton's interests me and you will help matters I know."

"But I was joking. Are you serious? I help! You don't mean to tell me that——"

"Precisely, my dear sir. Melton has fallen madly in love with this pretty Miss Allen. I'm going to help him win the girl; *you* won't refuse to put in a word to help matters with her father."

"But he has not seen the girl more than a few hours and has known her scarcely ten minutes."

"That's true, but, it does not take three hours or ten minutes to fall in love with a pretty face. Melton is younger than I, and a great deal more sensible to the bargain. We have knocked about in a rough sort of way, earning our living whilst fortune hunting in almost every half-civilised part of the globe. Relatives of mine died recently and left me a comfortable income. We decided to return to dear old London and live together as benedicts. So you see how the little scheme has been upset. Melton married, and I—oh! I shall jog back to the Rand among the boys. Melton can utilise my income. He's a good sort, and top hats and kid gloves are more in his line than mine."

"My dear Granger, top hats and kid gloves suit neither of you. London's too formal; take Melton to Coloradò, Klondyke, the Cape, anywhere, only don't speak of Miss Allen and him as lovers. You seem to take everything for granted, but the whole thing is monstrous, impossible, ghastly. Don't you know that the poor girl is blind?"

"Blind! Blind! Good Heavens, man, you don't mean that the girl, Trissy Allen, is really blind? Why, her eyes—her blue eyes, man, they're not blind?"

"Sightless, my dear Granger, sightless."

"Poor old Melton," said Granger, and burying his head in his hands he remained silent for ten minutes or more. The great beads of sorrow which trickled down his hard set face moistened my eyes, and in that little cabin were the two heaviest hearts in the whole world. Men ought not to cry, but the honest tears of a strong man are worth their weight in gold.

"You have made a mistake," said Granger, crushing back a tear, "Miss Allen that was is Mrs. So-and-So now, married since you last met. Melton must never know that she is blind—you understand. Let us get him away from her at once. You must lie to him, I can't."

So said Granger, and hooking arms we betook ourselves to the promenade deck.

Poor old Melton was looking very happy and it was evident that our intrusion annoyed him. His subtle hints were lost, however, and when I suggested escorting Miss Allen to her father his looks towards me were not kindly disposed. He whispered "cad" in my ear, and I passed him my cigar case to soothe his feelings.

"I hope my friend has not bored you," I remarked to Trissy.

"That's not charitable. He's a charming fellow, so considerate and entertaining. Tell me, does he know about my eyes?"

"Yes, I think. Your father was telling his wife at dinner."

"His wife! You said wife, didn't you?"

"Yes. Would you like to know her?"

"Oh! no, thanks!"

* * * * *

I rejoined Melton and Granger in their cabin. When Melton had finished abusing me for interfering with his *tête-à-tête* in such an indecent manner, I broke the "news" as gently as I could. I talked about the pity of young and pretty girls being swallowed up by rich old men and remarked upon how surprised I was to hear that Trissy was married up to some old buffer.

Melton looked at me very hard and said: "I thought you introduced her to me as Miss Allen."

"I owe you an apology, Melton. Her father has just told me that she is a Mrs. Somebody or other—an old man's darling."

Melton's whole frame quailed. He chewed the butt end of his cigar, and I never felt such a cad in all my life. He looked towards Granger as if in search of the truth. Granger was stretched out on his bunk, eyes closed and tears trickling down his ashy cheek.

"What are you crying for?" said Melton.

"It's the smoke of one of your bad cigars that's got in my eyes," replied Granger, flicking the ash off his dead cheroot.

But, Granger was crying, whilst Melton's heart bled. And that's the truth.

GEORGE MARTIN.

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The Three Inseparables.

A BOARDING SCHOOL STORY.

THE three "Inseparables" were sitting in the big bay window of Dorothy Rivers' room at the Misses Primrose's Seminary for Young Ladies at Brighton, and they were looking as glum as could be. And this will seem strange when I tell you that the Christmas holidays were only ten days off, and their young heads should have been full of such joyous things as visions of home comings, pantomimes and plum puddings.

The trouble was this: Both Dorothy and Edith Howard had received a note saying that their mid-year examinations in English history and geography had been so poor that unless they were prepared to take another examination in each study before they went home for Christmas the Misses Primrose would be obliged to give them holiday work to do.

Now, to have to study during the holidays was too horrible to contemplate. It would spoil half their fun, and, moreover, it was a sort of disgrace which both girls would have felt keenly.

It was rather strange that both of them should have been found deficient in the same studies, and also strange that Ada Ward, the third of the "Inseparables," should have passed everything. It was nothing but pure luck, as she was decidedly the poorest scholar of the three.

Ada had invited both Edith and Dorothy home with her for the holidays, as Edith's home was in Scotland, and Dorothy's sole relative—her father—was still abroad.

"Isn't it too dreadful for anything!" exclaimed Dorothy, with tears in her eyes, as she gazed blankly at the note.

"I see nothing for us to do but to burn the midnight oil between now and breaking-up time," said Edith despondently.

"What! Study your eyes red and worry yourselves half to death just to please our dear teachers?" demanded Ada. "Why, I won't hear of it. So just put that idea out of your head at once."

Ada was a healthy, robust girl of fifteen, and, being older than her two friends, she had assumed a sort of guardianship over them which they did not dispute.

"All right, Ada," said Dorothy meekly. "I am not over anxious to work myself ill, but what do you propose to do?"

"Let me have till to-morrow morning to think out a plan, and I'll promise you to find a way out of your trouble."

The two worried ones had unbounded confidence in Ada's ability to get them out of any scrape, and now, with sighs of relief, they dismissed the matter from their minds and, going out in the school playgrounds, they had a merry romp till it was time to dress for dinner.

The next morning at breakfast a letter was handed to Ada. She opened it, frowned, and bit her lip. "So provoking!" she murmured.

"I trust there is nothing wrong at home, Miss Ada!" said Miss Tabitha Primrose, looking over her spectacles at her pupil.

"Why, my cousin Alice, who lives at Hove, wants me to spend a couple of days with her. She is not well and her husband is away on business. She says the carriage will be here for me in an hour or so," replied Ada, and she handed the missive across the table to Miss Tabitha.

"I am very sorry to have you miss any recitations at this time," said Miss Primrose. "But, under the circumstances, of course, fall in with your cousin's wishes."

"Thank you, Miss Primrose. I am quite sure Alice really needs me or she would not have sent this note," replied Ada, and hurrying through the meal, she excused herself, and went to her room to get ready for her departure. Here Edith and Dorothy found her ten minutes later.

"You're a nice one!" cried Dorothy, breathlessly, "running off in this fashion, when you promised to get us out of our scrape."

Ada burst out laughing.

"My dear girls," she began, "this visit of mine is simply part of my little scheme to help you out of your scrape."

Two long drawn eloquent "Ohs!" came from the other two.

Ada went to her little desk and picked up some slips of paper.

"Here, girls," she said, "take these papers. They contain a list of questions in English history and geography. Learn the answers perfectly. It won't take you long. Now, my dears," she went on, "don't be surprised at what may happen during the next two or three days. All I ask of you is to learn the answers to these questions, and give them when they are asked of you. And now, good-bye for a little while."

"But Ada!" cried Edith, "please tell us more. What does it all mean?"

"The less you know—now—the less danger there is of my little plan going amiss," retorted Ada, and not another word could her two friends draw out of her.

That night at dinner Miss Tabitha made the following announcement to the school:

"I have just received a letter from Miss Mary Evans, who is, so she informs me, a teacher in a large school for girls in the north of England. She says that she has heard of our excellent method of instruction and she is going to take the liberty—as she expresses it—of calling here to-morrow. She says she would like to spend a few hours attending our various classes with the idea of studying our methods.

"I need not tell you," Miss Tabitha added, "that I shall be most pleased to entertain Miss Evans, who, I am sure, must be an extremely nice person, judging

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from her letter. Of course, I trust all you young ladies will make it your special duty to be well prepared for to-morrow's recitations, as I shall naturally feel a pride in your making a good impression before a strange teacher."

Dorothy looked at Edith and Edith looked at Dorothy. Then they grew red in the face. Presently they both stole from the table and went straight for Dorothy's room.

"What can it mean?" burst out Dorothy. "You don't think that—that——"

"Oh, no! It's just a coincidence; that's all," replied Edith. "All the same, we had better study the questions Ada told us to, and to-night."

And they did, working till long past their usual bedtime. Miss Tabitha, seeing a chink of light under Dorothy's door, walked in.

"Under ordinary circumstances I should not approve of such late hours," she announced to the two girls, "but owing to the fact that you are both deficient and that we are expecting a visiting teacher I regard this studiousness as most commendable." And so saying she bestowed a faint smile on Edith and Dorothy and left them.

Miss Evans did not come the next day, much to the disappointment of the school, which had carefully prepared itself in its studies. The second day, however the lady arrived shortly after morning prayers. The maid came in and told Miss Tabitha, whereupon that excellent lady hurried down from the rostrum and went to greet her distinguished visitor.

She was gone about three minutes, when she returned, ushering in a lady of medium height, in a sober gown, and whose eyes were rather weak evidently, as she wore blue goggles. Her hair was neatly plastered down and parted in the middle in the old-fashioned way, and a very plain bonnet adorned her head. Altogether she was an intensely respectable lady, of apparently middle age. She had a wonderfully clear, ruddy skin for her years, and not a wrinkle was to be seen.

Miss Tabitha introduced her to her sister, and then Miss Primrose came forward to the edge of the rostrum, and said in impressive tones:

"Young ladies, I have the great pleasure and honour to introduce to you my esteemed fellow teacher, Miss Mary Evans, of York." A loud clapping of hands greeted Miss Evans as she stepped forward, with a smile.

"Girls," said the visitor, "it is a great pleasure to be standing here addressing you to-day." How great a pleasure it was none of her hearers knew then or ever did know except Dorothy and Edith. "I have heard a great deal about you and this excellent establishment." Here the speaker turned and smiled graciously at the two principals, who bobbed their heads and fairly beamed with gratified pride. "And I hope to-day to learn with my own ears that the good reports of your high standard of studiousness have not been exaggerated."

At that a perfect buzz went round the room, and each girl wondered with a good deal of trepidation if she would be the one to be called upon.

"I should inform you," Miss Evans went on, "that English history and geography are the branches which I am most interested in," which was perfectly true at that particular time, "and I trust the Misses Primrose will permit me to put a few questions to you at random."

Here Miss Evans turned to the two sisters. Immediately Miss Tabitha jumped up and got a couple of books, which she placed in Miss Evans's hand.

"You will find to-day's lesson marked in each book," said Miss Tabitha.

"Oh! Thank you," said Miss Evans. "But with your permission I should prefer to ask the girls some questions of the work they have gone over instead of to-day's lesson. It is so much better as a test of what they know."

There was a doleful silence at that, and the Misses Primrose looked glumly at one another, for none knew better than they how quickly their pupils forgot, and Miss Tabitha was afraid the result would not be flattering to her pride. She could not very well refuse Miss Evans's request, however, and so, rather ungraciously, she gave her consent to her scholars being examined on their past work.

Miss Evans asked a couple of questions, one of which was answered correctly, but the second floored two or three. Then Miss Evans looked at Dorothy.

"Can you give me the answer?" she asked.

Of course Dorothy could, for it was one of the questions which Ada had told them to study. Miss Tabitha beamed upon Dorothy. It was a very searching question, and she had not expected such cleverness from her. Miss Evans went on picking out difficult questions in both history and geography, and somehow it was Dorothy or Edith who answered most of them.

At length Miss Evans said she must take her departure, at which the Misses Primrose expressed their great regret. They went with her to the door to see her off, and on the way Miss Evans inquired very particularly about those two girls who were so quick with the correct answers.

"Dorothy Rivers and Edith Howard are the young ladies to whom you refer," replied Miss Primrose.

"My dear Miss Primrose," cried Miss Evans impressively, "I must congratulate you on having two such clever, intelligent girls. Quite out of the ordinary, my dear madam, quite out of the ordinary. Now, good-bye, and let me thank you for the kindness which you have shown in giving me this opportunity to study your very excellent system which has such splendid results. I have enjoyed myself immensely. In fact, I don't know when I have enjoyed myself more!"

And then Miss Evans left with considerable haste. If the Misses Primrose could have seen her after she turned the corner they would have been astonished. For the stately Miss Evans was leaning up against a fence in a fit of hysterics. When she had recovered sufficiently to proceed she picked up her skirts and ran—yes, actually ran! till finally she came to a waiting carriage. She climbed in and fell into the arms of a bright, cheery looking little woman who was evidently expecting her.

"Well," said this person. "Did it work all right?"

"Oh, Alice dear!" cried Miss Evans. "Not a soul suspected. It worked like a charm!"

And then Ada, for of course it was she, went into another spasm of laughter. It was fully half an hour before her young married cousin who had helped her to carry out her daring trick could get six words from her as to how the thing went off.

The Misses Primrose were so delighted with the credit which Dorothy and Edith had brought upon the school by reason of their excellent conduct before Miss Evans, that they excused the girls from taking the extra examination.

Needless to say, both Dorothy and Edith learnt the truth about Miss Evans. But to this day the story has gone no farther.

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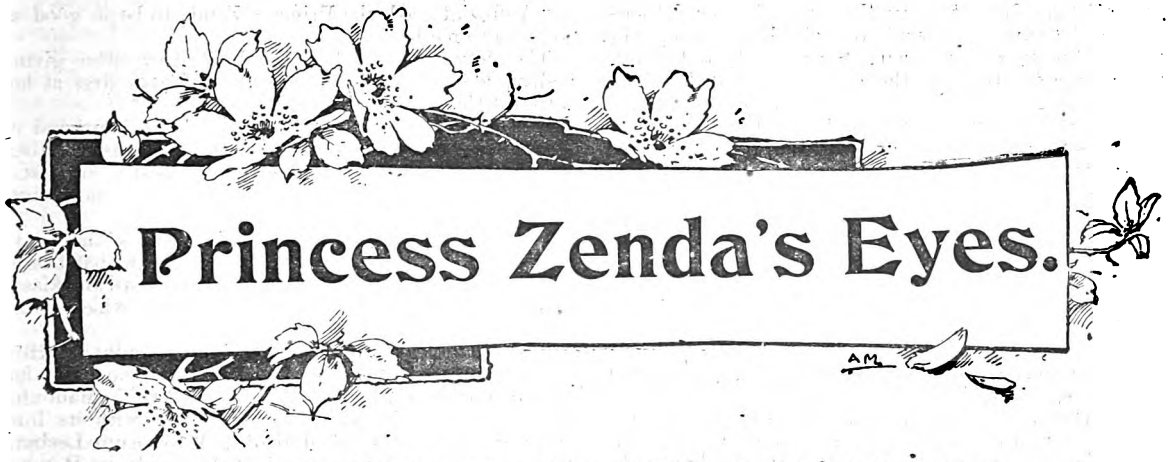

Princess Zenda's Eyes.

"Don't look at me like that, Zenda," a soft, sweet voice cried. "You give me the horrors! I can't tell you how I dislike it."

The speaker was Norah FitzGerald, an Irish child of twelve, whose auburn hair, blue eyes and fair round face were in curious contrast to the lovely oval face framed in soft waves of dusky hair of the little Roman Princess Zenda, her large dreamy brown eyes fringed with dark lashes which cast a shadow on the curve of a cheek rich as a pomegranate in its colouring.

"If her life's summer fulfils the promise of her life's spring, she will be the most beautiful woman in Rome," had been said of her by an old connoisseur in feminine charms, a friend of Prince di Lonza, Zenda's father.

"Look at you! Like what?" Zenda asked in a wondering voice. "You are the third person to-day who has said to me: 'Do not look at me like that!' First it was Lucia, the woman who brings the milk. She called out when she saw me, 'Don't look at me like that, Principessa!' and straightway dropped her big earthenware jar full of milk, which broke into a thousand pieces. She went away crying to get some more, grumbling the while that it was all my fault!

"Then a while after I saw Beppo, the gardener, who was going along, laden with flowers and fruit. He stopped short and cried out in just the same way, then limped off, declaring that he had sprained his ankle, and that it was all my fault!

"I ask of you now, Norah, how could either mishap be my fault? They were both accidents such as might happen to anybody. And as to my eyes, again I say, why am I not to look? And look like what? Are my eyes different from other people's eyes? *Dio mio!* Then in what way? Mine are brown and yours are blue, but with our eyes we both see the same things, don't we? Look, there in that chair is the Padre Bruno, our chaplain. Good, I see a white-haired old priest with the face of a saint; what do you see?"

"I see the same," said Norah, "but it's no good talking, Zenda, I don't mean seeing, I mean looking, and if that's an Irishism, I can't help it, for you have an uncanny expression in your eyes sometimes, which makes me wish to run away."

Upon which Zenda abruptly turned her back upon her; her big brown eyes—eyes which everybody seemed to object to—full of tears; then she crossed the balcony impulsively to where the old priest sat conning his breviary, oblivious to everything outside its covers, and knelt down beside him.

"*Padre mio!*" she said beseechingly.

The Padre laid down his book and looked at the lovely pleading face from over the top of his spectacles.

"Well, my child?" he said, and paused.

"Can you see anything the matter with my eyes?" she asked.

"The matter with your eyes?" he repeated. "Why, are they paining you?"

"No, no!" poor Zenda cried, and then told him the little story of her woes as she had told it to Norah.

The old priest waited patiently until she had finished; then he shook his head.

"The Devil's antics are strange sometimes," he said, "but your eyes——"

He looked at her again, and Zenda, all her soul in her face returned his gaze with frank simplicity.

"Child! Don't look at me like that!" he cried sharply. "It is as though the Devil himself had got inside you and looked forth from your eyes—the windows of your soul!"

Zenda clasped her hands on her knees.

"Not you too, *padre mio!*" she said despairingly. "What have I done to be the fit abode of evil?"

"My child," the Padre answered gravely, "it is God's most beautiful temples which Satan would fain enter and desecrate. See here—I will bless you—then go. I must finish my prayers, for presently I have to go and confess the nuns in the Convent of Santa Maria yonder."

He raised his hand and blessed her with a sweet solemnity, and Zenda rose from her knees feeling in a measure comforted, and afterwards, for many a long day she was not met with the strange entreaty:

"Princess! Do not look at me like that!"

* * * * *

The years sped by all too swiftly. Norah FitzGerald, from a little Irish girl, became a piquant beauty of eighteen, made her *début* in London, and in her first season, married a man who was considered the great *parti* of that year.

And so, she passed through the portals which lead to wifehood, motherhood, and passes also from this story, her wreath of orange blossoms still resting sweet and fresh upon her pretty Irish head.

And Zenda?

Zenda had lost her mother when she was just thirteen, and for months after that her life would have been a blank, but that at first it was full of Requiems.

By-and-bye, when the first keenness of her sorrow had

worn off, she dreamt away the hours in her father's stately palace amongst her flowers and birds, except the time she spent in study with the white-haired priest, their chaplain. He was the one friend to whom she seemed to cling.

Her father, busy with many things because of the official position he held at the Vatican had little time to give his child. He hardly noticed her, until one day, her existence was very practically brought before him by Donna Lesbia.

Donna Lesbia was an old relation who lived with the Di Longas, to do the house-keeping and to keep an eye on Zenda, the motherless young girl.

She sent one day a formal message to the Prince—she wished, she said to see him immediately on business.

The Prince happened to have a spare half hour, and was in an unusually good temper owing to the success of one of his speculations.

"Tell Donna Lesbia that I shall be with her on the instant," he told the servant, and throwing away his half-smoked cigarette, he went along the passage leading to the wing occupied by Donna Lesbia and the Princess Zenda. It faced the oratory and the Padre's room and study.

Donna Lesbia was sitting near the window in a great elbow-chair of carved wood, high-backed and cushioned with green and gold brocade.

Her dignified mien and austere face frightened Zenda rather, and she ran away from her whenever she could to take refuge with Padre Bruno.

But the Donna Lesbia had a kind heart under the snow-white kerchief she wore so primly crossed over her bosom; and she also possessed a large share of common sense and a seasoning of worldly wisdom hardly guessed at by those who saw her wrapped up in her devotions, engaged in work amongst the poor, or stitching for hours exquisite things on satin with lavish use of golden thread, chiefly vestments destined for some poor parish church.

"*Buono giorno,* my aunt, *come sta?*" was her kinsman's greeting.

"I am well, thank you—and you?"

"Better than I have ever felt in my life," he told her. "And now what may the business be, my dear lady? I am ready to give you my best attention."

"That is well," said Donna Lesbia quietly, "for it is no less a matter than the marriage of your daughter."

"The marriage of my daughter! But—*donna mia!* You are surely joking? Zenda's marriage—that child? What nonsense!"

"She is not a child," said Donna Lesbia firmly: "You forget how time passes, Francesco; Zenda is already eighteen.

"Every morning at eight o'clock, Zenda goes to hear a mass at the church of Santa Maria there, opposite our gates, attended by her old nurse Anunziata; and every morning—so I am told by the faithful servant—the young Duke of Spolento attends the same mass.

"I should have thought that this was a mere coincidence but yesterday I received a visit of ceremony from his mother, the Duchess, who asked for your daughter's hand in the name of her son."

"The Duke of Spolento," repeated the Prince. "Good—if the child must marry, I could not wish for a better alliance. He is young, rich, handsome, distinguished—but Zenda asked already in marriage! I can't grasp the idea at all. But then, I have not seen the child for ages; send for her quickly, I want to look at her."

Donna Lesbia took up an antique silver bell which stood on a table near her and rang it. An old servant with a face like a wrinkled apple appeared.

"Anunziata, ask the Princess Zenda to be so good as to come to me here."

The old woman courtesied and withdrew, after giving a sharp glance out of her shrewd black eyes, first at her mistress then at the Prince.

"There is something in the wind," she muttered as she hobbled away to fetch Zenda, who, all unsuspecting, ran lightly along the corridor to her aunt's room still holding in her hands her favourite pet, a snow-white dove.

She paused on the threshold, holding back the heavy crimson curtain with one hand, when she saw that Donna Lesbia was not alone; then she came forward and kissed her father's hand with a cold dutifulness which vexed him.

"But I am a stranger to her," he thought. "How could it be otherwise? Goodness! How the child has grown, and what a beauty! She looks like a Madonna, too, in that plain white woollen dress with its long straight folds and jewelled girdle! Why, Aunt Lesbia," he said aloud, "she will turn half the heads in Rome—we won't speak about the hearts."

"Hush!" said Donna Lesbia softly, "the child is as simple about her beauty as is that dove she carries. Don't spoil her, I beseech you!"

"Well, well, as you will. Are you going to leave all the pretty things to be said by the husband-elect—eh?"

Donna Lesbia smiled a little and shook her head.

"What do you think of getting married, child?" the Prince asked Zenda.

"Married!—I?" said Zenda wonderingly.

"Yes, you, Zenda, my little daughter—but no, you are tall, though so slender—and—what an air! Child—how like you are to your mother!"

The Prince paused and turned aside.

If his mind was shallow in parts, it held one sacred depth—his love for his dead wife, and Zenda noticed and marvelled to see that there were tears in his eyes.

"Your hand has been asked in marriage by the young Duke of Spolento," the Prince continued. "I understand that he attends the same mass as you, my daughter—a strange coincidence truly; I am glad to hear that he is so devout!"

Zenda's lovely face flushed until the crimson wave had reached her soft dark hair.

"The Duke of Spolento!" she repeated.

"Yes—he and no other. Will you marry him?"

"Yes," said Zenda quietly and clearly, "I have seen him often and I love him."

Her father laughed.

"Good," he said. "Then it seems that though no words have passed between you, your hearts have spoken. 'Tis for all the world like some old play—only—I won't come in and ruin all things by any ill-advised tyranny, for in this case I am very willing to say:

"'Bless you, my children.' Silly child, don't look so shy, but kiss me and get back to your flowers and studies."

* * * * *

A glorious sunny day has dawned on Rome.

In a large chamber all hung with tapestry, representing in a series of pictures the Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin, Zenda stood bathed in the sunshine which poured in at her window.

Anunziata was helping her to dress.

"A plain white dress for the moment, nurse, and my prayer-book, the big black velvet one. I must go to mass as usual at Santa Maria's."

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"For the last time from your father's house, Princess," murmured the old woman sadly.

"But not the last time you will attend me there," said Zenda quickly, "for Filippo—I mean the Duke—has said that I might bring you with me as my maid instead of that Margherita you know of."

"I should hope so, indeed," grumbled Anunziata, "a little flighty thing like that! But, Princess, there goes the bell. We must hasten," and mistress and maid left the palace together.

As they crossed the square to the church, a little page ran up to them with a great basket of roses.

"For the Princess Zenda," he said, "from the Duke of Spolento."

Zenda stooped to take the roses and thanked the pretty child.

"Tell your master it shall deck the altar of Our Lady," she said, and passed on into the church.

Once more, a few hours later, she stood in her big tapestry-hung chamber, a tall figure, dressed in sheeny white and pearls, her trailing draperies standing out in relief against the dark and dingy colours of the wall.

Anunziata fastened the wreath of orange blossoms about her head with a diamond clasp, adjusted the snowy veil, and murmured:

"No fairer bride has ever yet been seen in Rome."

But Zenda stood silent.

It was a joyous day for her, but she stood on the threshold of a new existence, and the knowledge added a touch of gravity to the brilliant beauty of her face, which made it even more beautiful.

At the church, the Cardinal and many other priests were in the Sanctuary, and a gathering of the fashionable world of Rome.

And the bride?

The bride walked to the altar over a pathway of crimson rose-leaves, and many people murmured like old Anunziata:

"Never has been seen a fairer bride in Rome."

The bells rang, the censers gave out their cloud of sweet incense, and presently the Princess Zenda came down the isle—a wife.

Then back to the palace swept the train of wedding guests, where the breakfast was served with all the magnificence the Prince thought fitting on such an occasion as the marriage of his only daughter.

Zenda left the table before her guests, and passing the oratory on her way to her room she went in.

Father Bruno was sitting there as usual conning his breviary.

Zenda went quickly towards him and knelt down.

"*Padre mio*," she said, "give me one more blessing before I take off my bride's dress! How I shall miss you—your daily blessing, your kind words."

The old priest rose and solemnly laying his hands on her head, he blessed her. Zenda stood up and paused a moment to take a last look at the saintly ascetic face.

"Child! Don't look at me like that!" the Padre cried and fell back suddenly in his chair.

"He has fainted," Zenda thought, and ran for help.

The servants came, and after one look at the Padre's face, they hurried their young mistress away, assuring her all would be well—and presently she left her home, the air ringing with "vivas," little dreaming that her old friend was dead.

When she heard, she wrung her hands and said:

"Surely I have a curse upon me."

But, by-and-bye, in her married happiness, and in the birth of her son, she found forgetfulness and peace.

Five years passed by, five years of perfect bliss to Zenda.

Her husband worshipped her and her child, a boy with sunny curls and dimples, and full of fun and laughter, was a daily source of joy.

No shadow fell on her life's pathway; all was sunshine, until one day when the Duchess Zenda was standing on a balcony watching her husband cantering up and down the great courtyard below.

He held their little son upon the saddle before him, carefully encircled with one arm.

The child was laughing gleefully, and as he passed the balcony cried out to his mother:

"On a horse, *mama mia*, come and see!"

Zenda went down the steps leading from the balcony to the court, her white dress trailing behind her, a bunch of roses in her hand—a gracious, beautiful woman, more lovely than ever since her motherhood.

"I come!" she cried, and the Duke reined in his horse.

"How sweet the boy looks," said she; "but be careful, Filippo, he is so small and young!"

"Careful!" he said, "of your child, Zenda—our child!"

He looked down tenderly at his wife, thinking what a picture of loveliness she made standing against the old moss-grown wall in her white dress.

"Do you know how much I love you?" he asked her.

"I am inclined to think—a great deal," she answered. "If I measure your love by mine!" and she looked up at him, all her soul in her face.

"Wife! Don't look at me like that!" he cried.

His voice, so suddenly raised, startled the horse just fresh from the stables; it plunged, reared, then reared again and fell backwards—on Filippo and the child.

* * * * *

In a stately Roman palace lives the widowed Duchess Zenda, save for her servants, all alone. She divides the time between the poor, her books, and her devotions, but never will she hear of any suitor for her hand.

She has the same words to say to one and all:

"Nay, marriage is not for me, or love, or even friendship. Men say I have the Evil Eye, and they make the 'sign' with their hands as I pass them. I do not know what truth there may be in their words, but this I know, that Satan loves to find a lodging in God's fairest temples. They tell me that I am fair! Perchance the Evil One has found a home in my eyes. Those whom I have loved, these eyes have killed—then must I no more love lest I should do more harm. It is a mystery, but God in whom I trust will set all right at last, and when the film of death o'erspreads my eyes, then they will seek and find their dear ones by the light of Heaven."

And one by one her suitors went away.

Some said: "'Tis a sad case." Others: "She is mad."

But old Anunziata stays faithfully beside her, murmuring "Aves" for her mistress all the live-long day.

The stranger passing her palace who asks:

"Tell me, who lives there?" is answered always:

"The Duchess Zenda di Spolento, beautiful to behold, good as an angel, but—your ear, Signor—she has the Evil Eye!"

And the driver crosses himself devoutly and drives on to show the visitor (with much profit to himself) the sights of Rome.

CONSTANCE CRAIGIE HALKETT.

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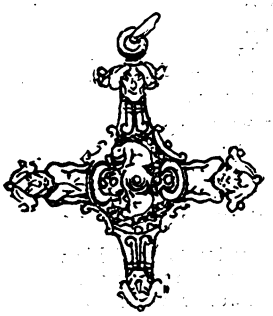
THE DEVIL'S HEIRLOOM



STANDING by the Temple of Victory on the Acropolis of Athens, just as the first glimpse of day was chasing away the blackness of night, were two young men with clean shaven faces, and that general air of breeziness which attaches itself to men who "go down to the sea in ships."

They had stumbled up the grand flight of steps—which still remain fast, although nearly nineteen hundred years have rolled away since human hands built them—to see the sun rise. They were rewarded for their early awakening, for nowhere in the world is there a more gorgeous or awe-inspiring sight.

As the globe of fire slowly lifts itself from the East, the temples and monuments of past greatness become tinged with lurid flame which softens their ruins and accentuates their beauty. Whilst one watches they go through all the changes of the rainbow until at last a pitiless wave of orange light exposes the full devastation wrought by the vandalising hands of Ancient Persians, Turks and Venetians.

The two men had started to come down when their course was arrested by an old woman who lightly touched the arm of the younger.

With the instinctive courtesy and gentleness which was part of his nature he turned to her at once.

"Come along, Ogilvie," said the other, "I don't know how you feel but the thought of breakfast appeals to me at the present moment. The lady is only desirous of selling you a portion of the Temple of Theseus made from the paving stone of modern Athens."

"All right, Wilmot, you go on; I'll catch you up."

Then, as his friend continued the descent Lieutenant Reginald Ogilvie turned to the woman and asked kindly:

"Well, mother, what is it you want?"

First casting a malignant glance at the descending figure, she faced round to the young officer, and said, in good English:

"Your friend was right; your friend was wrong. I have something to sell and something to give. To him who buys, my gift is given."

"Very well, let me see what you have," Ogilvie remarked, his curiosity piqued.

From her pocket the woman produced a good-sized emerald whose green lustre sparkled in the sun and placed it unhesitatingly in Ogilvie's hand.

"Well, is this the article for sale, or the gift?" he queried quizzingly.

"That is for sale, one shilling buys it.'

"Why so cheap?"

"It is part of the price which the last recipient paid for the gift."

"Part! May I ask what the other portion was?"

"Her life."

Ogilvie edged away a little from the woman, beginning to doubt her sanity.

"You think I am mad,' she observed in a quieter tone, "but my mind is as clear as yours. Let me show you the gift."

From another pocket the woman produced a small jewel case, and pressing the spring of the lid disclosed to view a carved cross of different shades of amber. Exquisite and patient workmanship was shown in every detail, the blending of the different shades was perfect: the ornament was unique.

Ogilvie stretched out his hand for it. But the woman drew it back jealously as she said:

"None can touch until they know its power and accept the responsibility its possession demands. Let me tell you part of its history.

"From its maker's hands it passed to Maurice Renault, a French painter of great repute. He wore it as a charm and exactly a month from the day he received it, he was seized by some mysterious malady which baffled the doctors and finally left him a mental and physical wreck. He has never painted since, and never will again. It next passed to Bella Dyson, a countrywoman of your own, who was an actress. Her principal—perhaps only—qualification for her position was her beauty. Three days after she placed it on her beautiful white bosom, a virulent attack of small-pox laid her low. She recovered, but her beauty had gone for ever.

"A father bought it for his only child, the one being in the world that he lived for. She pressed it to her lips and died of lockjaw. In her agony she hurled it from a window of the room she was in, on to the lawn. A tramp, coming up to the house to beg, found it, and considering it treasure-trove conveyed it to the wretched slum he called home. Within a week the inhabitants of that court were struggling in the fearful tortures of typhoid fever. The doctors and scientists said it was the filthy surroundings. Perhaps they aided in the general devastation, but the real cause was the 'Devil's Heirloom.'

"None can possess it without suffering misfortune. Rich and poor, it affects alike. Whatever is of most value to its holder it steals from him. Beauty, talent, wealth, love, position are the tributes it exacts. If you are possessed of none of these or possessing them, value

them not, then it is content to accept your life. But it never takes life when the retention of it can be made a greater curse."

Ogilvie had been listening to the old woman's wild outburst with incredulity written on every line of his face. When she had finished he inquired why she had chosen him as a likely person to whom to pass on the doubtful present.

"Because you are an English sailor, and they are always brave," she answered. "You do not fear its malign influence, do you?" she continued eagerly. "All that I have told you is the myth of a disordered brain, is it not?" and her voice took a wheedling, coaxing tone. "Ask them down there in the town if the old English woman is not mad. They will tell you 'Yes, quite mad. She raves, she wanders in her talk, but she is harmless, quite harmless.' See the pretty bauble," and she waved the cross in front of his eyes. "You will take it and scoff at the wild talk of the madwoman like the brave officer that you are. Will you not? See, it has a pretty ribbon attached. You can slip it round your neck and wear it on your chest always, until you meet the lady you love, then you can give it to her, and she will prize the gift the more because you have worn it. Eh?"

As Reginald sat down to join him, Wilmot commenced to chaff him about the morning adventure. Quite unconcerned at the attack, the victim gave a true and particular account of what had taken place.

"I am afraid, mother, that you are calculating upon arousing the superstition which is generally ascribed to the sailor," answered Ogilvie. "That is old navy—quite obsolete. Nowadays we delight to get under way on a Friday and are positively glad to see rats deserting the ship. When steam took the place of canvas, it also chased away the old beliefs. If you care to sell your cross I will buy it. Not that I believe in the marvellous qualities for good and evil that you may ascribe to it, but because it is beautiful. Now will you take a sovereign for it?"

"Yes! yes!" she answered eagerly. "Give me the money."

"Ah, that was what you wanted," Ogilvie said, as he produced the necessary coin.

"Of course," she answered eagerly as she clutched the money. "Nothing but that. Good morning, brave English officer," and she hobbled down the Great Stair a few steps in front of him, turning at every one to look back with a hideous chuckle of joy breaking from her lips.

As she reached the bottom she waited for him, and once more adopting the wheedling tone begged him to let her place the cross round his neck.

"Oh yes, anything," he answered good-naturedly, anxious to get rid of her. So with wizened hands trembling with excitement, she fastened the ribbon and slipped the cross down behind his collar.

"There was a time when a man would have been delirious with joy if I had offered to do this," she observed as the operation was finished. "I was once known as Bella Dyson, the second victim of the cross that I told you of." Then she hobbled away, this time for good.

"What a wicked old yarn-pitcher," thought Ogilvie. "Of course it was only the money she wanted."

Perhaps he would have changed his mind on that point if he could have seen her contemptuously fling the coin he had given her to the first beggar with whom she came into contact.

When Ogilvie returned to the hotel which he and Wilmot had made their headquarters whilst on leave, he found the latter gentleman doing ample justice to the breakfast. As Reginald sat down to join him, Wilmot commenced to chaff him about the morning adventure. Quite unconcerned at the attack, the victim gave a true and particular account of what had taken place, which had the effect of sending Wilmot into a still greater explosion of mirth.

"My dear Reg," he managed to ejaculate between his outbursts, "your ingenuous 'phiz' makes you the victim of every lying guide and relic-seller who infests the ports at which *H.M.S. Beetle* makes a call."

"Maybe," retorted Ogilvie in a rather aggrieved tone, "but you must admit that on this occasion I have not done so badly. An emerald and a specimen of workmanship such as that cross are not dear at a guinea—are they?"

"No, I suppose not," agreed his comrade and there the matter ended.

Within six hours after their breakfast was finished they were watching the fast receding shores of Greece from the quarter deck of the *Beetle* as she steamed away with the remainder of the Fleet *en route* for Malta.

The first division of the Mediterranean Fleet had been on their usual cruise previous to settling down in Malta for a general over-haul and re-fitting, and England's principal naval base in the Mediterranean was full of excitement at the prospect of once more welcoming back that branch of the service which represents a goodly percentage of the necessary funds whereby the Maltese supply their simple wants.

But it was not only the ancient owners of the soil who were overjoyed. There were several English ladies who had willingly shared their husbands' exile from England, content to see them for the few months in the year which their ships spent in Malta. Amongst these was Mrs. Wilmot, the wife of Commander Wilmot of *H. M. S. Beetle* and with her, was Miss Wilmot, her husband's sister.

For two years Gertrude Wilmot had been engaged to Reginald Ogilvie and it was whispered that as soon as the *Beetle's* commission was finished the lady would change her name. Be that as it might we need hardly say that her face was perceptibly brighter when she remembered that within a few more hours she would be clasped in the arms of her lover.

At last from the signal station on the cliffs the Fleet was sighted. The news ran through the town like wild-fire and when the ships steamed majestically into the vast harbour to their respective moorings half the population of the Island were gathered on the quays to greet them, and the other half were dotted about on the water in "disos," as the Maltese boats are called, for a like purpose.

It was a pretty sight, quite apart from the commercial and love interests involved.

With the scarlet and blue-coated guard drawn up on the quarter-deck, and the hands not actually engaged in the mooring operations mustered at their respective quarters, ship after ship passed through the entrance to the accompaniment of cheers from the populace and booming of the guns firing the requisite salutes.

Now and then a too venturesome "diso" would get in the way of one of the warships and then an unearthly whoop from the leviathan's siren would rend the air as a warning and the offending boat promptly got to a safe distance, the sightseers in it no doubt heaving a sigh of contentment as the vast ship safely passed them.

As soon as their duties would admit Wilmot and Ogilvie hurried ashore to the ladies who were anxiously awaiting them.

Only four months had passed since they met, but to those who have dear ones exposed to the dangers of the sea the months seemed years, the days weeks.

However, when the Fleet is at Malta the ladies contrive to see a lot of their menfolk. There are afternoon receptions on the ships, official and social gatherings ashore, drives to Cettia Vecchia, an inland town, or the Roman Villa.

It was about a week after Reginald's return that the first discordant note was struck in the lover's perfect happiness.

They had been for a drive together, and on the way home Reggie had complained of a bad headache. When they arrived home Gertrude insisted upon his lying down whilst she bathed his forehead with eau de Cologne. In spite of this he gradually got worse, and at last they got him to bed and sent for a doctor.

A brief examination satisfied the medical man, and then the verdict went forth—Lieutenant Reginald Ogilvie was down with a bad attack of typhoid fever.

Contrary to the advice of everybody Gertrude insisted upon nursing him. She was a girl of strong individuality, and maintained that her place was by the sick bedside of the man who was to be her husband.

Then followed days of anxiety whilst the fell disease got to its height, and Reggie's life trembled on the border line between life and death.

But at last his splendid constitution triumphed and it was known that in all probability he would recover.

It was just after the crucial point had been passed that one of Mrs. Wilmot's servants was stopped in the street by an old woman who questioned her closely upon the condition of the young officer.

After hearing the good news the questioner pressed some coins in the girl's hand and said, eagerly,

"Is he rich, this Lieutenant Ogilvie?"

"No," answered the girl. "I believe he has very little besides his pay, but he is to marry Miss Wilmot who has a large fortune of her own."

"Not rich and not to die," muttered the old woman. "Can it have lost its efficacy at last. Impossible! And yet this man does not die, and has no fortune to lose. Tell me," she said out aloud. "Have you nursed him? Have you seen him? Does he wear on his breast an amber cross?"

The girl rather alarmed at the woman's vehemence began to move off. The woman moved after her and clutched her arm and again put her questions in a somewhat quieter tone, at the same time pressing a sovereign into the girl's hands.

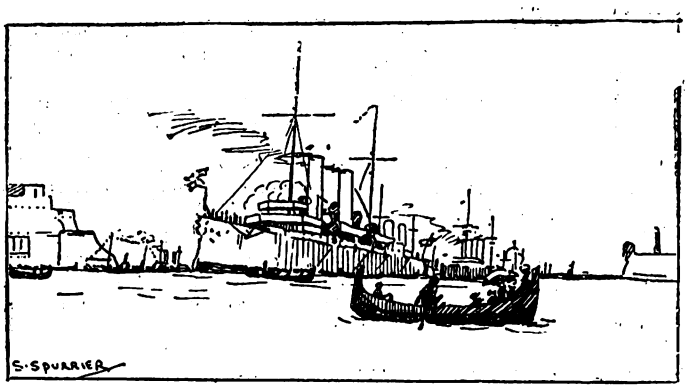
"He has a blue ribbon round his neck. I saw it the other day when I made his bed. Perhaps the cross is attached to that," answered the girl.

"He wears it still and yet recovers. What does it mean?" muttered the woman as she hobbled away.

The servant on her return to the house did not mention her encounter with the woman as her conscience rather pricked her for the way she had talked of the affairs of her master's guest.

That night the mysterious cross again changed its owner.

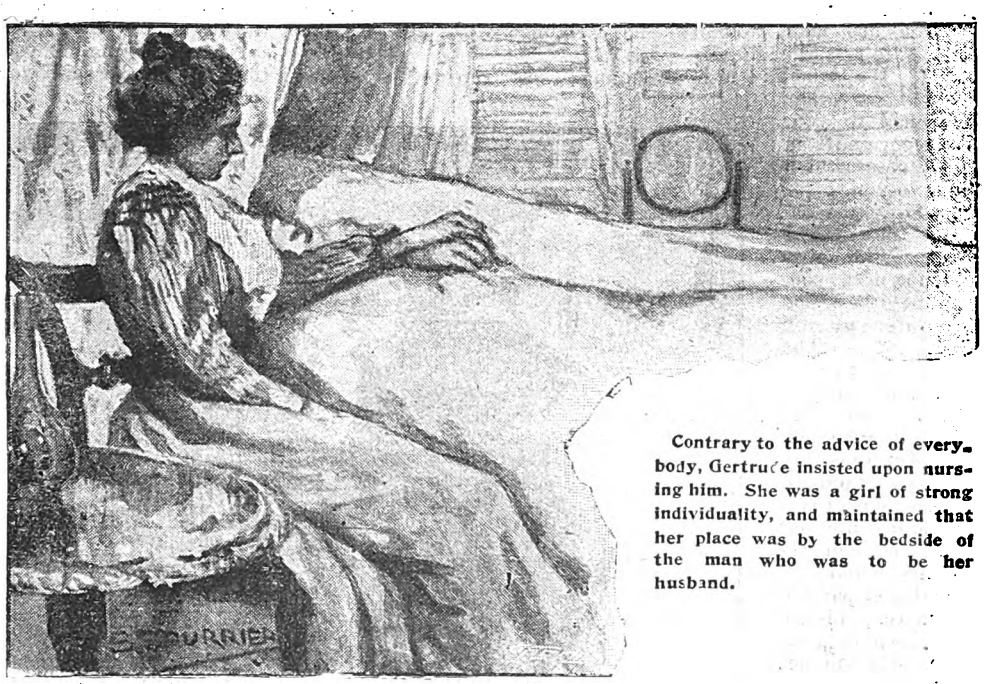
Gertrude had of course seen it during the time she had been at the bedside of the sick



With the scarlet and blue-coated guard drawn up on the quarter-deck, and the hands not actually engaged in the mooring operations mustered at their respective quarters, ship after ship passed through the entrance to the accompaniment of cheers from the populace, and booming of the guns firing the requisite salutes.

man and wondered why he should wear it. She questioned him gently about it, half thinking that it might have some tender associations.

He had nearly forgotten the circumstances under which he had obtained it. The vendor's behaviour at the time had made some slight impression upon him, but the moment after he had dismissed her wild talk as the ravings of a madwoman. He had worn the yellow cross purely from motives of the utmost contempt for the old woman's jargon. The superstition that surrounded the ornament, had only excited the latent controversy in his nature at the time, and needless to say he did not attribute his late illness in the slightest degree to the charm. Consequently he saw no reason why he should not give it to Gertrude as she admired it, and accordingly he did so.



Contrary to the advice of everybody, Gertrude insisted upon nursing him. She was a girl of strong individuality, and maintained that her place was by the bedside of the man who was to be her husband.

After the transfer of the cross Ogilvie made rapid strides towards convalescence and within two months had quite regained his health and strength and was able to resume his duties on the ship.

The Fleet was by now in full preparation for the forthcoming cruise and the officers and crew of the *Beetle* were in high fettle because this would be the last one before they returned to England to "pay off."

Two days before they were to leave Mrs. and Miss Wilmot took passage in a P. and O. liner for England, so that they would be there to greet Wilmot and Ogilvie when they arrived.

The two men went to see the ladies off and almost the last words that Gertrude Wilmot said were to the effect that she should wear the cross Reggie had given her next to her heart till they met again.

The two men stood watching the liner until she was hull-down, then turned to go. Wilmot had to proceed on board at once but Ogilvie was free to stay ashore for a few hours.

He decided to utilise the time for a walk.

After he had strolled round Valetta for a time he made his way to the San Antonio Gardens and reaching them sat down on a seat to rest. He had been there a few minutes when a shadow crossed him, and looking up he saw that an old woman was standing in front of him. There was something familiar about her, and he tried to remember where he had seen her before.

Then there suddenly flashed across his memory that scene on the Acropolis of Athens, and a vague feeling of uneasiness took possession of him.

"I have come again, brave officer," said the woman at last, in a mocking tone.

"That fact is rather obvious," he replied in a jocular tone which belied his feelings.

"You have been ill?" she said, narrowly examining his face.

"Yes, but am quite strong again now, thank you." And he rose and stretched himself as though to corroborate his words.

"You are fortunate. The cross is not usually content with a few weeks' illness."

"Stop that nonsense," he cried angrily, remembering in whose hands the cross at present was.

"It is not nonsense. But that is not the point. I have come to buy it back. I will give you treble what you gave me."

"Even if I were willing to sell it to you I could not. It has left my hands. I have given it to the lady who is to be my wife."

"You have given it to her," the woman repeated slowly. "Then I do not want it back. At least not yet."

"What do you mean?" he said hoarsely.

"I mean that the cross will yet exact its penalty," she replied enigmatically.

A great wave of doubt swept across his mind, and he seized her roughly by the shoulders and shook her.

"Don't talk in riddles, woman, tell me outright what you mean," he almost screamed.

"I mean," she said calmly, releasing herself from his grip, "that she will die."

Then her voice lost its calmness and she seemed to tower above the stricken man like some evil genius as she reiterated in triumphant tones. "She will die! She will die! The cross always takes what is loved best. It spared your life because there was something nearer

and dearer to you that it wanted. At one fell swoop you will lose her and her fortune. It never fails. It never fails. You cannot get it back for she has gone to England. She is on the sea now, perhaps wearing the cross on her white neck."

"You are mad, woman!" he exclaimed with an attempt to reassure himself.

"Do I speak like a madwoman?" she retorted. "Think of what happened to you. You recovered from an illness which came to you, after your life was despaired of. Why? Because the cross did not need you, it wanted her. She is dearer to you than life. The mere fact of living is worthless to you without her. It did not take my life, but took my beauty. It did not take Maurice Renault's life, but took the cunning of his hand—remember he painted no more. Listen, and accept your fate. She will die! She will die!"

With the triumphant words of the woman ringing in his ears the wretched man tore through the gardens like a madman.

At the gate he hired a conveyance and drove down to the quay. On the way down he tried to compose his thoughts. No doubt remained in his mind that some danger unknown, unseen, but all the more terrible on that account, lurked in the cross, and the woman he loved would, in a few hours, be placing it next to her tender body; and he was powerless to save her.

The only thing that could possibly overtake the liner was one of the swift torpedo destroyers attached to the Fleet. If only he could obtain one of these he might yet overtake the liner in time. As he reached the quay he saw one with steam up, and a wild desire to go aboard, set her engines going, and dash out of the harbour seized him, but he cast it aside as folly. As he stepped into the *Beetle's* boat which was waiting, he asked the coxswain if he knew where the torpedo catcher was off to.

Gertrude Wilmot was waiting in the gangway to receive him, and he pushed past the passengers and officers to her side. "The cross—you are not wearing it, darling?" he whispered.

"To Gib, with dispatches, I believe, sir," answered the man as he saluted.

To Gibraltar, the first port at which the liner would touch. It was maddening. Just a little extra pressure on her engines would enable her to catch up, and pass the liner, and he was powerless.

"The Captain was asking for you, sir, just before we left, and the Commander said would you get aboard as soon as possible," said the cox, interrupting his painful thoughts.

"Very well. Shove off at once," said Ogilvie.

When they reached the *Beetle* Wilmot met him at the gangway, and said:

"The Captain wants to see you at once, Ogilvie. Belson of No. 36 is ill, and she is to go to Gib with dispatches. The Admiral made a signal that we are to supply an officer to take charge in his place, and you are the one the Captain has chosen. I have told your servant to get your chest packed."

Ogilvie's heart gave a bound. No. 36 was the torpedo-destroyer which the cox of the boat had spoken of. Providence had intervened in his behalf. There was yet a chance of his being able to reach Gertrude before the cross could effect the fell work which the old woman claimed it would.

It did not take him long to interview the Captain. He was to proceed at once to the flagship to receive his instructions from the Admiral.

His servant, thanks to Wilmot's instructions, had already got his uniform out, and his chest stood ready packed in the gangway.

A few minutes more and he was being rowed to the flag-ship.

The Admiral's instructions were brief and to the point. Ogilvie was to proceed with the utmost dispatch to Gibraltar, and hand over the documents to the officer in charge of the dockyard.

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"It is very necessary that the dispatch should be in his hands as soon as possible, so do not hesitate to use the coal," was the Admiral's last order. And Ogilvie, as he saluted, mentally resolved that Torpedo Destroyer No 36 should not belie her reputation as a "Flier." Within the half-hour, the torpedo destroyer was steaming out of the harbour. Once clear she was let go at full speed, and the island began to sink astern.

To Ogilvie it was a race, with life or death as the goal.

At the rate of thirty knots she tore through the sea, cutting a path for herself in the water, and tossing spray and waves over her steel deck.

Every man of her small crew knew that something extraordinary was happening, and every nerve and sinew was strained to get the best out of the slender vessel.

Down below in the stoke hole the stokers piled on coals beneath the throbbing boilers, their nerves strung up and the thumping of their hearts keeping time with the pulsating machinery. Never before had the boat moved as it was doing now.

For twenty-four hours the wild race was kept up and then at last the liner loomed up before them.

Rapidly they overhauled her, signalling her to stop.

Time is money on a liner, but her captain knew that it must be a matter of vital importance so he slowed down and Ogilvie went aboard, the liner and torpedo destroyer continuing their voyage in company, so that no time was wasted.

Gertrude Wilmot was waiting in the gangway to receive him and he pushed past the passengers and officers to her side.

"The cross—you are not wearing it, darling?" he whispered.

"Yes," she answered reproachfully. "Did I not promise that I would?"

"Yes, I know, dearest, and will explain later. But for God's sake take it off and bring it to me!"

While she had gone to her cabin Ogilvie made his way to the fore-bridge, there to apologise and explain to the liner's captain.

That gentleman was inclined to be sceptical as to the power of the cross, but suggested that the ship's doctor should examine it.

When the worthy medico received it, his first action was to chip a small portion off and place it under a powerful microscope. He had scarcely applied his eye to the glass when he sprang back with a cry of horrow.

"Good Heavens, man, you were right," he exclaimed. "There is enough typhoid bacilli in this tiny fragment to kill a dozen men."

With every precaution other fragments were chipped off and examined, and bacilli of every known contagious disease were discovered. Some fiend incarnate with an intense hatred against his fellow human beings had introduced the deadly microbes into the innocent-looking ornament. The warmth of a person's body would excite them to do their deadly work.

When this had been explained to Ogilvie he had an objection to raise to it.

"But I thought amber was a petrified gum which would not be susceptible to the comparatively small amount of heat which would emanate from a person's body," he said.

"This material is not amber," answered the doctor, "but a resinous gum which might easily be mistaken for it by the uninitiated."

"But the woman from whom I got it. How was it that she was not stricken down?"

"She was once, according to her own account, and no doubt she took particular care that it did not touch her flesh after. I should not imagine that she really knew the secret of its composition, but looked upon it as having some supernatural powers."

"Do you think Miss Wilmot will suffer any evil effects?"

"That is impossible to say; but it will be my especial care to closely watch for any signs, and rest assured we shall nip them in the bud."

Thanks to the precautions taken by the doctor and also probably to the fact that the cross had only rested on her neck for such a comparatively short time, no evil effects resulted to Gertrude. But Ogilvie had a most anxious time during the remainder of the torpedo-destroyer's journey to Gibraltar; and indeed until a cable reached him from Gertrude, to the effect that she had arrived in England, in good health.

The real maker of the "Devil's Heirloom" was never discovered; for the old woman when found was in a dying condition, and she went to her grave with the secret, if she ever knew it, wrapped in her own breast. In spite of her assertion to the contrary she was no doubt partially insane, driven so, by the terrible disaster brought on by the cross. Her mania had taken the awful form of passing on the cross to innocent people; and when its fatal work was done, regaining possession of it. She had ample means so that she was enabled to travel about, with this object in view.

MARTIN-HARRY.

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of W. Pett Ridge's "Three Women and Mr. Cardwell," to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source must be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. A. Hutton, of 3 Lapage Street, Bradford. Attempts for this week's prize may deal with any subject, and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, January 15th. Post-cards only, please.

The Paper Wouldn't Work.

A DETACHMENT of the men of the Ordnance Survey were at work in a certain district. One man had got into a field, and, on seeing the intruder climb the wall, the farmer went up to him, and the following dialogue ensued:

Farmer: "Hey, lad, out of this!"

Surveyor: "Oh, no; I have a right to go anywhere, and if you will not believe me I will show you my Government paper."

"You'll 'ave to go," persisted the farmer.

"No, I shan't!" was the reply.

The farmer went round to his sheds, which opened upon the field, and let out a vicious bovine of the masculine gender.

The bull went for the official, and he in turn did his level best to beat the record in a race to the wall, whilst the farmer, mounting a gate, yelled out to him as he fled: "Show it the Government paper, you silly!"

A Reasonable Request.

"Go to bed, sir, in the cupboard there," said an enraged Scotch father to his son, who had given him just cause of offence. "Were it not that these gentlemen are present I would give you a sound whipping, but you shall have it before breakfast to-morrow, certain."

The little rebel went to his crib with a heavy heart, and the enjoyments of the party continued until a late hour.

Just when the party was about to break up, the cupboard door was quietly pulled back, and the young offender put out his head, requesting that the sentence might be put into execution.

"Father, would ye just gie me my liks this night, for I canna sleep without them?"

"W.H.S.B."

AN inspector in one of the schools under the West Ham School Board, during an inspection, had been very pleased with the answers of the scholars in a certain class. Thinking to put a poser, he asked what the four letters "W.H.S.B." stood for, after printing them on a blackboard.

No answer for some time. At last, a sharp scholar put up a hand to reply.

"Well?" said the inspector.

"What Ho! She Bumps!" was the unexpected solution, to the great amusement of everybody.

Following Instructions.

THE boy hung back when the visitor spoke to him, and his mother was, naturally, annoyed.

"Won't you go to Mrs. Brown, Willie?" she said.

"No," replied the boy shortly.

"Don't you like me?" asked Mrs. Brown good-naturedly.

"No, I don't," answered the boy.

"Why, Willie?" exclaimed his mother reproachfully.

"Well, I got beaten for not telling the truth yesterday, and I don't mean to be to-day," protested the boy.

Very Rough.

AN Irishman had the misfortune to be commandeered by the Boers, and compelled to fight against the British, much to his disgust.

His first experience of the campaign was anything but cheerful. He was marched for hours in a pouring rain over an extremely desolate tract of country. Sometimes he was up to his knees in water and mire, sometimes barking his shins against rocks and stones, or stumbling into some hole.

Presently, he deliberately turned his back and began a retrogade movement.

"Here, where are you going?" cried a field cornet to him.

"Home!" scornfully retorted Pat. "Bedad, a country like this ain't worth fightin' for."

And home he went.

Common Sense.

RECENTLY, while travelling in Germany, an Englishman was observed to be constantly putting his head out of the window. The train was going fast, and a sudden gust of wind blew off his hat.

With an exclamation he took down his hat-box, and hurled it after his hat. Then he sat down and smiled on his fellow-passengers, but did not speak.

The Germans roared with laughter, and one of them exclaimed:

"You don't expect your hat-box to bring your hat, do you?"

"I do," said the Englishman. "No name on the hat, full name and hotel address on the box. They will be found together, and I shall get both. Do you see now?"

Then those Germans subsided, and said they always had considered the English a great and practical nation.

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The Countess was her Father.

AT a certain party a young man was introduced to a lady, whom he understood to be the daughter of the Countess of Ayr.

By-and-bye he ventured to ask after her mother, the Countess.

"My father, you mean," said the lady (her mother being dead).

"No—no—no," said the bewildered youth, "I was asking after your mother, the Countess of Ayr."

"Yes," was the reply, "but that's my father."

Whereupon the young man rushed off and told his hostess that the young lady must be quite mad, as she told him the Countess of Ayr was her father.

"So he is," answered the hostess, "let me introduce you to him. He is Mr. Smith, the county surveyor."

Perfectly Correct.

A YOUNG minister, in the course of an eloquent sermon on the pomps and vanities of the world, staggered his congregation by exclaiming:

"Here am I standing preaching to you with only half a shirt on my back, while you sit there covered with gewgaws and other baubles."

The next day a parcel containing several brand new shirts was left at his house by one of his hearers, a kind-hearted old lady. Meeting the donor a few days afterwards, he thanked her exceedingly, but expressed much surprise at receiving such an unexpected gift.

"Oh!" said the lady, "you mentioned in your sermon that you had only half a shirt on your back."

"Quite true," added his reverence, "but you seem to forget that the other half was in front."

One to the Plumber.

A PLUMBER was sent to the house of a wealthy merchant to make repairs. He was taken by the butler into the dining-room, and was beginning his work, when the lady of the house entered.

'John," said she, with a suspicious glance towards the plumber, "remove the silver from the sideboard, and lock it up at once."

But the man of lead was in no wise disconcerted.

"Tom,' said he to his apprentice, who accompanied him, "take my watch and chain and these coppers home to my missus at once; there seem to be shady people about this house."

A Complete Vengeance.

AT a certain theatre, not long ago, a gentleman who gets murdered in the first act, and who subsequently turns up as foreman of the jury, was dissatisfied at the rate of stipendiary emolument wherewith his efforts were rewarded. Being unable to obtain redress, he vowed vengeance.

So the next night, when in the course of the trial in Act IV. the man who had done the deed denied all knowledge of it in the stirring words allotted to him by the collaborators, the foreman of the jury upset the calculations of everybody in the theatre by rising solemnly, and saying:

"I tell you, Simpson, you *did* do it. I ought to know, for I'm the very man you killed; and it's the last time you'll do it, sir, at the price I'm paid at present." Curtain.

He Didn't Pay.

AN old Scotsman, not feeling well, called upon a doctor. The doctor gave him some verbal instructions as to how to regulate his diet, advising him, among other things, to drink no spirits for a time.

The Scotsman rose to leave, when the doctor said:

"I am in the way of charging for my advice. I will trouble you for half-a-crown."

"Oh, maybe," said the patient, "but I'm no gaun to tak' yer advice!"

Why the Goods were Broken.

PAT MALONY was nailing a box which he intended sending by rail. It was essential that the box should not be inverted during the passage, and a friend ventured to suggest to Pat to write conspicuously on the case:

"This side up, with care."

A few days afterwards seeing Pat, he asked:

"Heard any more about your goods? Did they get there safely?"

"Every one of them broke," said Pat.

"The whole lot? Did you label it 'this side up,' as I told you?"

"Yes, I did. And for fear they shouldn't see it on the cover, I put it on the bottom."

After the Opera.

EXCITED AUDITOR: "I declare, I never saw such wretchedly bad taste—such a scandalous violation of the dramatic unities—such an outrage on all sense of propriety!"

Friend: "What's the matter, old man? Some of 'em been gagging again?"

Excited Auditor: "Gagging isn't a circumstance to it. The opera was *William Tell*—a grand thing, you know — and just as the curtain rose on the scene displaying the hat of the tyrant Gesler on a pole, to which the hero refuses to bow, what does that wretched orchestra do but strike up 'Where did you get that hat?' Destroyed all the romantic illusion of the piece. Soulless brutes!"

The King and the Seidlitz Powders.

ON the first consignment of seidlitz powders reaching the capital of Delhi the monarch was deeply interested in the accounts of their refreshing qualities. A box was brought to the King in full Court, and the interpreter explained how they should be used.

Into a goblet he put the contents of twelve blue papers, and having added water the King drank it off. This was the alkali, and the royal countenance expressed no sign of satisfaction.

It was then explained that in the combination of the two powders lay the luxury; so the twelve white powders were quickly dissolved in water, and as eagerly swallowed by his Majesty with a shriek that will be remembered while Delhi exists.

The monarch rose, staggered, exploded, and in his full agonies screamed, "Hold me down!" then rushing from the throne, fell prostrate on the floor. There he lay during the long-continued effervescence of the compound, spurting like ten thousand pennyworths of Imperial pop, and believing himself in the agonies of death—a melancholy and humiliating proof that kings are mortal.

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THE ANGEL OF THE REVOLUTION

By GEORGE GRIFFITH

CHAPTER LVI.

The Coming of the Bride.

The isolated building near which the *Ithuriel* had come to rest was used ostensibly as a shooting and hunting-box by Michael Roburoff and a couple of his friends, and in reality as a meeting-place for the Inner Circle or Executive Council of the American Section of the Brotherhood. This Section was, numerically speaking, the most important of the four branches into which the Outer Circle of the Brotherhood was divided—that is to say, the British, Continental, American, and Colonial Sections.

All told, the Terrorists had rather more than five million adherents in America and Canada, of whom more than four millions were men in the prime of life and nearly all of Anglo-Saxon blood and English speech. All these men were not only armed but trained in the use of fire-arms to a high degree of skill. Their organisation, which had gradually grown up with the Brotherhood for twenty years, was known to the world only under the guise of the different forms of industrial unionism, but behind these there was a perfect system of discipline and command which the outer world had never even suspected.

The Section was divided first into squads of ten under the command of an eleventh who alone knew the leaders of the other squads in his neighbourhood. Ten of these squads made a company commanded by one man who was only known to the squad-captains, and who alone knew the captains of the regiment, which was composed of ten companies.

The next step in the organisation was the brigade, consisting of ten regiments, the captains of which alone knew the commander of the brigade, while the commanders of the brigades, were alone acquainted with the members of the Inner Circle or Executive Council which managed the affairs of the whole Section, and whose Chief was the only man in the Section who could hold any communication with the Inner Circle of the Brotherhood itself, which, under the immediate command of Natas, governed the whole organisation throughout the world.

This description will serve for all the Sections, as all were modelled upon exactly the same plan. The advantages of such an organisation will at once be obvious. In the first place, no member of the rank and file could possibly betray more than ten of his fellows, including his captain, while his treachery could, if necessary, be made known in a few hours to ten thousand others, not one of whom he knew, and thus it would be impossible for him to escape the invariable death penalty. The same is, of course, equally true of the captains and the commanders.

On the other hand, the system was equally convenient for the transmission of orders from head-quarters. An order given to ten commanders of brigades could, in a single night, be transmitted individually to the whole of the Section, and yet those in command of the various divisions would not know whence the orders came, save as regards their immediate superiors.

It will be necessary for the reader to bear these few particulars in mind in order to understand future developments which, without them, might seem to border on the impossible. It is only necessary to add that the full fighting strength of the four Sections of the Brotherhood amounted to about twelve millions of men, a considerable proportion of whom were serving as soldiers in the armies of the League and the Alliance, and that in its cosmopolitan aspect it was known to the rank and file as the Red International, whose members knew each other only by the possession of a little knot of red ribbon tied into the button-hole in a peculiar fashion on occasions of meetings for instruction or drill.

The three lights burning in the form of a triangle in the window of the house were a pre-arranged signal to avoid mistake on the part of those on board the air-ship. When they reached the earth Arnold, acting under the instructions of Tremayne, who was his superior on land though his voluntary subordinate when afloat, left the *Ithuriel* and her crew in charge of Lieutenant Marston and Andrew Smith, the coxswain.

The remainder disembarked, and then the air-ship rose from the ground and ascended out of sight through a layer of clouds that hung some eight hundred feet above the high ground of the hills. Lieutenant Marston's orders were to remain out of sight for an hour and then return.

Arnold had not seen Natasha for several hours previous to the landing, and he noticed with wonder, by no means unmixed with something very like anger, that she looked a great deal more cheerful than she had done during the voyage. She had preserved her composure all through, but the effort of restraint had been visible. Now this had vanished, although the supreme hour of the sacrifice that her father had commanded her to make was actually at hand. When her feet touched the earth she looked round with a smile on her lips and a flush on her cheeks, and said, in a voice in which there was no perceptible trace of anxiety or suffering:

"So this is the place of my bridal, is it? Well, I must say that a more cheerful one might have been selected, yet perhaps, after all, such a gloomy spot is more suitable to the ceremony. Come along, I suppose the bridegroom will be anxiously waiting the coming of the bride. I wonder what sort of a reception I shall have. Come, my Lord of Alanmere, your arm, and you, Captain Arnold, bring the Princess. We have a good deal to do before it gets light."

These were strange words to be uttered by a girl who but a few hours before had voluntarily confessed her love for one man and was on the eve of compulsorily giving herself up to another one. Had it been anyone else but Natasha Arnold could have felt only disgust, but his love made it impossible for him to believe her guilty of such unworthy lightness as her words bespoke, even on the plain evidence

before him, so he simply choked back his anger as best he might, and followed towards the house speechless with astonishment at the marvellous change that had come over the daughter of Natas.

Tremayne knocked in a peculiar fashion on the window, and then repeated the knock on the door, which was opened almost immediately.

"Who stands there?" asked a voice in French.

"Those who bring the expected bride," replied Tremayne in German.

"And by whose authority?" This time the question was in Spanish.

"In the Master's name," said Tremayne in English.

"Enter! you are welcome."

A second door was now opened inside the house, and through it a light shone into the passage. The four visitors entered, and, passing through the second door, found themselves in a plainly-furnished room, down the centre of which ran a long table, flanked by five chairs on each side, in each of which, save one, sat a masked and shrouded figure exactly similar to those which Arnold had seen when he was first introduced to the Council Chamber in the house on Clapham Common. In a chair at one end of the table sat another figure similarly draped.

The door was closed as they entered, and the member of the Circle who had let them in returned to his seat. No word was spoken until this was done. Then Natasha, leaving her three companions by the door, advanced alone to the lower end of the table.

As she did so Arnold for the first time noticed that she carried her magazine pistol in a sheath at her belt. He and Tremayne were, as a matter of course, armed with a brace of these weapons, but this was the first time that he had ever seen Natasha carry her pistol openly. Wondering greatly what this strange sign might mean, he waited with breathless anxiety for the drama to begin.

As Natasha took her stand at the opposite end of the table, the figure in the chair at the top rose and unmasked, disclosing the pallid countenance of the Chief of the American Section. He looked to Arnold anything but a bridegroom awaiting his bride and the ceremony which was to unite him to her for ever. His cheeks and lips were bloodless, and his eyes wandered restlessly from Natasha to Tremayne and back again. He glanced to and fro in silence for several moments, and when he at last found his voice he said, in half-choked, broken accents:

"What is this? Why am I honoured by the presence of the Chief and the Admiral of the Air? I asked only that if the Master consented to grant my humble petition in reward for my services, the daughter of Natas should come attended simply by a sister of the Brotherhood and the messenger that I sent."

They let him finish, although it was with manifest difficulty that he stammered to the end of his speech. Arnold, still wondering at the strange turn events had taken, saw Tremayne's lips tighten and his brows contract in the effort to repress a smile. The other masked figures at the table moved restlessly in their seats, and glanced from one to another. Seeing this, Tremayne stepped quickly forward to Natasha's side, and said in a stern, commanding tone:

"I am the Chief of the Central Council, and I command everyone here to keep his seat and remain silent until the daughter of Natas has spoken."

The ten masked and hooded heads instantly bowed consent. Then Tremayne stepped back again, and Natasha spoke. There was a keen, angry light in her eyes, and a bright flush upon her cheek, but her voice was smooth and silvery and in strange contrast to the words that she used, almost to the end.

Did you think, Michael Roburoff, that the Master of the Terror would send his daughter to her bridal so poorly escorted as you say? Surely that would have been almost as much a slight as you put upon me when, instead of coming to woo me as a true lover should have done, you contented yourself with sending a messenger as though you were some Eastern potentate despatching an envoy to demand the hand of the daughter of a vassal.

"It would seem that this sudden love which you do me the honour to profess for me has destroyed your manners as well as your reason. But since you have assumed so high a dignity it is not seemly that you should stand to hear what I have to say; sit down, for it looks as though standing were a trouble to you."

Michael Roburoff, who by this time could scarcely support himself on his trembling limbs, sank suddenly back into his chair and covered his face with his hands.

"That is not very lover-like to cover your eyes when the bride that you have asked for is standing in front of you, but as long as you don't cover your ears as well I will forgive you the slight. Now listen.

"I have come, as you see, and I have brought with me the answer of the Master to your request. Until an hour ago I did not know what it was myself, for, like the rest of the faithful members of the Brotherhood, I obey the word of the Master blindly.

"You, as it would appear, maddened by what you are pleased to call your love for me, have dared to attempt to make terms where you swore to obey blindly to the death. You have dared to place me, the daughter of Natas, in the balance against the allegiance of the American Section on the eve of the supreme crisis of its work, thus imperilling the results of twenty years of labour.

"If you had not been mad you would have foreseen the results of such treachery. As it is you must learn them now. What I have said has been proved by your own hand, and the proof is here in the hand of the Chief. This is the answer of Natas to the servant who would have betrayed him in the hour of trial.'

She took a folded paper from her belt as she spoke, and, unfolding it, read in clear, deliberate tones:

> "Michael Roburoff, late chief of the American Section of the Brotherhood. When you joined the Order, you took an oath to obey the directions of its chiefs to the death, and you acknowledged that death would be the just penalty of perjury. My orders to you were to complete the arrangements for bringing the American Section into action when you received the signal to do so. Instead of doing that, you have sought to bargain with me for the price of its allegiance. That is treachery, and the penalty of treachery is death.
>
> "NATAS."

"Those are the words of the Master," continued Natasha, throwing the paper down upon the table with one hand, and drawing her pistol with the other. "It rests with the Chief to say when and where the sentence of the Master shall be carried out."

"Let it be carried out here and now," said Tremayne, "and let him who has anything to say against it speak now or for ever hold his peace."

The ten heads bowed once more in silence, and Natasha went on, still addressing the trembling wretch who sat huddled in the chair in front of her.

"You have asked for a bride, Michael Roburoff, and she has come to you, and I can promise you that you shall sleep soundly in her embrace. Your bride is Death, and I have chosen to bring her to you with my own hand that all here may see how the daughter of Natas can avenge an insult to her womanhood.

"You have been guilty of treachery to the Brotherhood and for that you might have been punished by any hand, but you would also have condemned me to the infamy of a loveless marriage, and that is an insult that no one shall punish but myself. Look up, and, if you can, die like a man."

Roburoff took his hands from his face, and with an inarticulate cry started to his feet. The same instant Natasha's hand went up, her pistol flashed, and he dropped back again

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into his chair with a bullet in his brain. Then she replaced the pistol in her belt, and going up to Arnold held out both her hands and said as he clasped them in his own:

"If the Master's reply had been different that bullet would by this time have been in my own heart."

CHAPTER LVII.

THE CAPTURE OF A CONTINENT.

WITHIN an hour after the execution of Michael Roburoff the *Ithuriel* was winging her way back to Aeria, and at least two of her company were anticipating their return to the valley with feelings very different from those with which they had contemplated their departure.

When the last farewells and congratulations had been spoken, and the air-ship rose from the earth, Tremayne returned to the house to commence forthwith the great task which now devolved upon him, for in addition to being Chief of the Central Executive, he now assumed the direct command of the American Section, which, after long consideration, had been selected as the nucleus of the Federation of the English-speaking peoples of the world.

For a fortnight he worked almost night and day, attending to every detail with the utmost care, and bringing into play all those rare powers of mind which in the first instance had led Natas to select him as the visible head of the Executive. In this way the chief consequence of the love-madness of Roburoff had been to place at the head of affairs in America the one man of all others most fitted by descent and ability to carry out such a work, and to this fact its complete success must in a great measure be attributed.

So perfectly were his plans laid and executed, that right up to the moment when the signal was given and the plans became actions, American society went about its daily business without the remotest suspicion that it was living on the slope of a slumbering volcano whose fires were so soon to burst forth and finally consume the social fabric which, despite its splendid exterior, was inwardly as rotten as were those of Rome and Byzantium on the eve of their fall.

On the 1st of October the cables brought the news of the fall of the Quadrilateral, the storming of Hamburg, and the retreat of the British forces on Antwerp. Four days later came the tidings of a great battle under the walls of Antwerp, in which the British and German forces, outnumbered ten to one by the innumerable hosts of the League, had suffered a decisive defeat which rendered it imperative for them to fall back upon the Allied Fleets in the Scheldt, and to leave the Netherlands to the mercy of the Czar and his allies, who were thus undisputed masters of the continent of Europe.

This last and crowning victory had been achieved by exactly the same means which had accomplished all the other triumphs of the campaign, and therefore there will be no need to enter into any detailed description of it. Indeed, the fall of the Quadrilateral and the defeat of the last army of the Alliance round Antwerp would have been accomplished much more easily and speedily than it had been but for the fact that the weather, which had been fine up to the end of July, had suddenly broken, and a succession of violent storms and gales from the north and north-west had made it impossible for the war-balloons to be brought into action with any degree of effectiveness.

During the last week of September the storms had ceased and then the work of destruction began. Not even the hitherto impregnable fortresses of Tournay, Mons, Namur, and Liege, had been able to withstand the assault from the air any better than the forts of Berlin, or the walls of Constantinople. A day's bombardment had sufficed to reduce them to ruins, and, the chain once broken, the armies of the League swept in wave after wave across the plains which they had guarded.

The loss of life had been unparalleled even in this, the greatest of all wars, for the British and Germans had fought with a dogged resolution which, but for the vastly superior numbers and the irresistible means of destruction employed against them, must have infallibly triumphed. As it was it was only when valour had achieved its last sacrifice, and further resistance became rather madness than devotion, that the retreat was finally sounded in time to embark the remnants of the armies of the Alliance on board the war-ships. Happily at the very hour when this was being done the weather broke again, and the ships of the allied fleets were therefore able to make their way to sea through storm and darkness unmolested by the war-balloons.

On the night of the fifth of September the five words: "The hour and the man," went flying over the wires from Washington throughout the length and breadth of the North American Continent. The next morning half the industries of the United States were paralysed; all the lines of communication by telegraph and rail between the east and west were severed, the shore ends of the Atlantic cables were cut, no newspapers appeared, and every dockyard on the eastern coast was in the hands of the Terrorists.

To complete the stupor produced by this swift succession of astounding events, when the sun rose an air-ship was seen floating high in the air over the ten arsenals of the United States—that is to say, over Portsmouth, Charlestown, Brooklyn, League Island, New London, Washington, Norfolk, Pensacola, Mare Island, and Port Royal, while two others held Chicago and St. Louis, the great railway centres for the west and south, at their mercy, and the *Ithuriel*, with a broad red flag flying from her stern, swept like a meteor along the eastern coast from Maine to Florida.

To attempt to describe the condition of frenzied panic into which the inhabitants of the threatened cities, and even the whole of the Eastern States were thrown by the events of that ever-memorable morning, would be to essay an utterly hopeless task. From the millionaire in his palace to the outcasts who swarmed in the slums, not a man or a woman kept a cool head save those who were in the councils of the Terrorists. The blow had fallen with such stupefying suddenness that, as far as America was concerned, the Revolution was practically accomplished before anyone very well knew what had happened.

Out of the midst of an apparently peaceful and industrious population five millions of armed men had sprung in a single night. Factories and workshops had opened their doors, but none entered them; ships lay idle by the wharves; offices were deserted; and the great reels of paper hung motionless beside the paralysed machines which should have converted them into newspapers.

It was not a strike, for no mere trade organisation could have accomplished such a miracle. It was the force born of the accumulation of twenty years of untiring labour striking one mighty blow which shattered the commercial organism of a Continent in a single instant. Those who had been clerks or labourers yesterday, patient, peaceful, and law-abiding, were to-day soldiers, armed and disciplined, and obeying with automatic regularity the unheard command of some unknown chief.

This of itself would have been enough to throw the United States into a panic, but, worse than all, the presence of the air-ships holding at their mercy the arsenals and the richest cities in the Eastern States proved that, tremendous and all as it was, this was only a phase of some vast and mysterious cataclysm which might as easily involve the whole civilised world as it could overwhelm the United States of America.

By noon, almost without striking a blow, every dynamite cruiser and war-ship on the eastern coast had been seized and manned by the Terrorists. To the dismay of the authorities, it was found that more than half the army and navy, officers and men alike, had obeyed the mysterious summons that had gone throughout the land the night before, and matters reached a climax when, as the clocks of

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Washington were striking twelve, the President himself was arrested in the White House.

All the streets of Washington were in the hands of the Terrorists, and at one o'clock Tremayne, after posting guards at all the approaches, entered the Senate, and in the name of Natas proclaimed the constitution of the United States null and void and the existing Government dissolved.

Then with a copy of the Constitution in his hand he proceeded to the steps of the Capitol, and, in the presence of a vast throng of the armed members of the American Section, he proclaimed the Federation of the English-speaking races of the world, in virtue of their bonds of kindred blood and speech and common interests; and amidst a scene of the wildest enthusiasm called upon all who owned those bonds to forget the artificial divisions that had separated them into hostile nations and communities, and to follow the leadership of the Brotherhood to the conquest of the civilised world.

Then in a few strong and simple phrases he exposed the subservience of the Government to the capitalist Ring and, described the inhuman compact that it had entered into with the arch-enemies of national freedom and personal liberty to crush the mother-land of the Anglo-Saxon nations, and for the sake of sordid gain to rivet the fetters of oppression upon the limbs of the race which for a thousand years had stood in the forefront of the battle for freedom.

As he concluded his appeal, one mighty shout of wrath and execration rose up to Heaven from a million throats. He waited until this died away into silence, then, raising the copy of the Constitution above his head, he cried in clear ringing tones:

"For a hundred and fifty years this has been boasted as the bulwark of liberty and used as the instrument of social and commercial oppression. The Republic of America has been governed, not by patriots and statesmen, but by millionaires and their hired political puppets. It is therefore a fraud and a sham, and deserves no longer to exist!"

So saying, he tore the paper into fragments and cast them into the air amidst a storm of cheers and volley after volley of musketry. While the enthusiasm was at its height the *Ithuriel* suddenly swept downwards from the sky in full view of the mighty assemblage that swarmed round the Capitol. She was greeted with a roar of wondering welcome, for her appearance was the fulfilment of a promise upon which the success of the Revolution in America had largely depended.

This was the promise, issued by Tremayne several days previously through the commanders of the various divisions of the Section, that as soon as the Anglo-Saxon Federation was proclaimed and accepted in America, the whole Brotherhood throughout the world would fall into line with it and place its aerial navy at the disposal of its leaders. Practically this was giving the empire of the world in exchange for a money-despotism of which everyone save the millionaires and their servants had become heartily sick.

There were few who in their hearts did not believe the Republic to be a colossal fraud, and therefore there were few who regretted it.

The *Ithuriel* passed slowly over the heads of the wondering crowd and came to a standstill alongside the steps on which Tremayne was standing. The crowd saw a man on the deck shake hands with Tremayne and give him a folded paper. Then the air-ship swept gracefully upwards again in a spiral curve until she hung motionless over the dome of the Capitol.

Amidst a silence born of breathless interest to know the import of this message from the sky, Tremayne opened the paper, glanced at its contents, and handed it to the senior officer in command of the brigades, who stood beside him.

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This man, a veteran who had grown grey in the service of the Brotherhood, advanced with the open paper in his hand and read out in a loud voice:

"Natas sends greeting to the Brotherhood in America. The work has been well done, and the reward of patient labour is at hand. This is to name Alan Tremayne, Chief of the Central Executive, first President of the Anglo-Saxon Federation throughout the world, and to invest him with the supreme authority for the ordering of its affairs. The aerial navy of the Brotherhood is placed at his disposal to co-operate with the armies and fleets of the Federation.

"NATAS."

When the mightly shout of acclamation which greeted the reading of this commission had died away, Tremayne stepped foward again and spoke the few words that now remained to be said:

"I accept the office and all that it implies. The fate of the world lies in our hands, and as we decide it so will the future lot of humanity be good or evil. The armies of the Franco-Slavonian League are now masters of the continent of Europe, and are preparing for the invasion of Britain. The first use that I shall make of the authority now vested in me will be to summon the Czar in the name of the Federation to sheath the sword at once and relinquish his designs on Britain. The moment that one of his soldiers sets foot on the sacred soil of our mother-land I shall declare war upon him, and it shall be a war not of conquest, but of extermination, and we will make an end of tyranny on earth for ever.

"Now let those who are not on guard-duty go to their homes, and remember that they are now citizens of a greater realm than the United States and endowed with more than national duties and responsibilities. Let every man's person and property be respected, and let the penalty of all violence be death. Those who have plotted against the public welfare will be dealt with in due course, and yonder air-ship will be despatched with our message to the Czar at sundown. Long live the Federation!"

Millions of throats took up the cry as the last words left his lips until it rolled away from the Capitol in mighty waves of sound, flowing along the crowded streets and overrunning the utmost confines of the capital.

Thus, without the loss of a hundred lives and in a space of less than twelve hours, was the Revolution in America accomplished. The triumph of the Terrorists was as complete as it had been unexpected. Menaced by air and sea and land, the great centres of population made no resistance, and, when they learnt the true object of the Revolution, wanted to make none. No one really believed in the late Government, and everyone in his soul hated and despised the millionaires.

There was no bond between them and their fellow-men but money, and the moment that was snapped they were looked upon in their true nature as criminals and outcasts from the pale of humanity. By sundown, when the *Ithuriel* left for the seat of war, the members of the Ring and those of the late Government who refused to acknowledge the Federation were lodged in prison, and news had been received from Montreal that the simultaneous rising of the Canadian Section had been completely successful, and that all the railways and arsenals and ships of war were in the hands of the Terrorists, so completing the capture of the North American Continent.

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE DAY OF RECKONING.

THE President of the Federation and his faithful subordinates went to work without losing an hour to reorganise as far as was necessary, the internal affairs of the Continent of which they had so suddenly become the undisputed masters. There was some trouble with the British authorities in Canada, who, from mistaken motives of duty to the mother country, at first refused to recognise the Federation.

The consequence of this was that Tremayne went north the next day and had an interview with the Governor-General at Montreal. At the same time he ordered six air-ships and twenty-five dynamite cruisers to blockade the St. Lawrence and the eastern ports. The Canadian Pacific Railway and the telegraph lines to the west were already in the hands of the Terrorists, and a million men were under arms waiting his commands.

A very brief explanation, therefore, sufficed to show the Governor that forcible resistance would not only be the purest madness, but that it would also seriously interfere with the working of the great scheme of the Federation, the object of which was, not merely to keep Britain in the first place among the nations, but to make the Anglo-Saxon race the one dominant power in the whole world.

To all the Governor's objections on the score of loyalty to the British Crown, Tremayne, who heard him to the end without interruption, simply replied in a tone that precluded all further argument:

"The day of states and empires, and therefore of loyalty to sovereigns, has gone by. The history of nations is the history of intrigue, quarrelling, and bloodshed, and we are determined to put a stop to warfare for good and all. We hold in our hands the only power that can thwart the designs of the League and avert an era of tyranny and retrogression. That power we intend to use whether the British Government likes it or not.

"We shall save Britain, if necessary, in spite of her rulers. If they stand in the way, so much the worse for them. They will be called upon to resign in favour of the Federation and its executive within the next seven days. If they consent, the forces of the League will never cross the Straits of Dover. If they refuse we shall allow Britain to taste the results of their choice and then settle the matter in our own way."

The next day the Governor dissolved the Canadian Legislatures "under protest," and retired into private life for the present. He felt that it was no time to argue with a man who had millions of men behind him, to say nothing of an aerial fleet which alone could reduce Montreal to ruins in twelve hours.

After arranging matters in Canada the President returned to Washington in the *Ariel*, which he had taken into his personal service for the present, and set about disposing of the Ring and those members of the late Government who were most deeply implicated in the secret alliance with the leaders of the League. When the facts of this scheme were made public they raised such a storm of popular indignation that if those responsible for it had been turned loose in the streets of Washington they would have been torn to pieces like vermin.

As it was, however, they were placed upon their trial before a Commission of seven members of the Inner Circle of the American Section presided over by the President. Their guilt was speedily proved beyond the shadow of a doubt. Documents, memoranda, and telegrams were produced by men who had seemed their most trusted servants, but who in reality, had been members of the Brotherhood told off to unearth their schemes.

Cyphers were translated which showed that they had practically sold the resources of the country in advance to the Czar and his allies, and that they were only waiting the signal to declare war without warning and without cause upon Britain, blockade her ports, and starve her into surrender and acceptance of any terms that the victors might choose to impose. Last of all the terms of the bargain between the League and the Ring were produced, signed by the late President and the Secretary of

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State, and countersigned by the Russian Minister at Washington.

The Court sat for three days, and re-assembled on the fourth to deliver its verdict and sentence. Fifteen members of the late Government, including the President, the Vice-President, and the Secretary of State, and twenty-four great capitalists composing the Ring, were found guilty of giving and receiving bribes, directly and indirectly, and of betraying and conspiring to betray the confidence of the American people in its elected representatives, and also of conspiring to make war without due cause on a friendly Power for purely commercial reasons.

At eleven o'clock on the morning of the 9th of October the President of the Federation rose in the Senate House, amidst breathless silence, to pronounce the sentence of the Court.

"All the accused," he said, speaking in slow, deliberate tones, "have been proved guilty of such treason against their own race and the welfare of humanity as no men ever were guilty of before in all the disreputable history of statecraft.

"In view of the suffering and misery to millions of their fellow men, and the irreparable injury to the cause of civilisation that would have resulted from the success of their schemes, it would be impossible for human wit to devise any punishment which in itself would be adequate. The sentence of the Court is the extreme penalty known to human justice—Death!"

A shudder passed through the vast assembly as he pronounced the ominous word, and the accused, who but a few days before had looked upon the world as their footstool, gazed with blanched faces and terror-stricken eyes upon each other. He paused for a moment, and looked sternly upon them. Then he went on:

"But the Federation does not seek a punishment of revenge but of justice, nor shall its first act of government be the shedding of blood, however guilty. Therefore as President I override the sentence of death, and instead condemn you, who have been proved guilty of this unspeakable crime, to confiscation of the wealth that you have acquired so unscrupulously and used so mercilessly, and to perpetual banishment with your wives and families, who have shared the profits of your infamous traffic.

"You will be at once conveyed to Kodiak Island, off the coast of Alaska, and landed there. Once every six months you will be visited by a steamer, which will supply you with the necessaries of life, and the original penalty of death will be the immediate punishment of any one of you who attempts to return to a world of which you from this moment cease to be citizens."

The sentence was carried out without an hour's delay. The exiles, with their wives and families, were placed under a strong guard in a special train, which conveyed them from Washington *vi*á St. Louis, to San Francisco, where they were transferred to a steamer which took them to the lonely and desolate island in the frozen North which was to be their home for the rest of their lives. They were followed by the execrations of a whole people and the regrets of none save the money-worshippers who had respected them, not as men, but as incarnations of the purchasing power of wealth.

The huge fortunes which they had amassed, amounting in the aggregate to more than three hundred millions in English money, were placed in the public treasury for the immediate purposes of the war which the Federation was about to wage for the empire of the world. All their real estate property was transferred to the various municipalities in which it was situated, and their rents devoted to the relief of taxation, while the railways and other enterprises which they had controlled were declared public property and placed in the hands of boards of management composed of their own officials.

(To be continued.)

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Result of the Coupon Competition.

THE publication of the result of this competition has been delayed on account of the enormous number of coupons received. It is, of course, impossible to give any detailed list of the winners of the prizes, unless we issued a double number, and we regret that we are unable to maintain any correspondence in regard to the competition. All persons to whom prizes have been awarded have been communicated with, and these include everybody who forwarded one hundred or more coupons. The largest number was received from

MR. A. M. BARLOW,
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Liverpool,

who sent 43,370 coupons, and to him we have therefore dispatched a cheque for £100. The second prize of £50 was won by

MR. E. C. COLEGRAVE,
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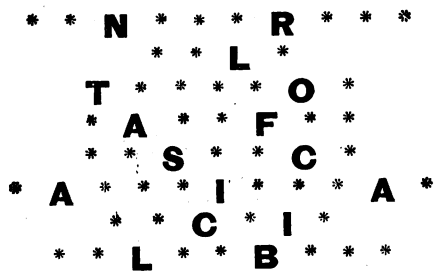
The Brain Gymnasium.

ON this page, under the title, "The Brain Gymnasium," will appear each week a series of puzzles calculated to occupy the attention of the competitors, with interest and profit to themselves, during the long winter evenings. Many of the tasks set will be comparatively easy of solution, while others will be designed with a view to taxing the abilities of the most proficient in this direction.

In each of the competitions a prize of ten shillings will be awarded to the sender of the first correct solution dealt with, and to the sender of the next five correct ones will be presented, in the case of the odd number competitions, one of our silver pencil cases, and, in the case of the even number competitions, a copy of a popular six-shilling novel.

All solutions must be written on separate postcards, and must reach the Editor, SHORT STORIES, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by Monday, January 22nd, 1900. Mark the postcards "Brain Gymnasium, No. 12," "Brain Gymnasium, No. 13," etc., according to the number of the competition of which the solution is sent.

No. 12.

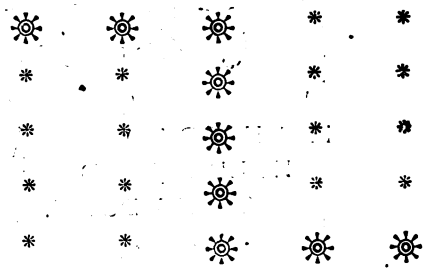


Replace the asterisks with letters so that each horizontal line will give the name of an English town. The initials will then form a word.

No. 13.

I AM what a cyclist often does on the track; cross out my third and sixth letters, and I am what a cyclist often does on the road; now cut off my initial and final, and I name a part of the cycle. What am I?

No. 14.



IN place of the above asterisks, insert the following letters, so that each horizontal line forms a word. The letters represented by the dark asterisks will then give, in three words, the name of something which all SHORT STORIES readers know how to use:

A D D D E E E E E E I I K L N N N N P R R S T T T Y

No. 15.

THE first and third letters of words signifying "a retreat," "a vessel," "condition," "a fern," "clatter," "pride," "ignominious," "a division of India," "a metal," and "charity," will form the names of a well-known football club and its home district.

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Black blocks are charged 25 per cent. extra. All advertisements are subject to approval. All copy must be sent in by Noon on Tuesday, Jan. **16th**, if intended for the issue on sale Jan. **30th**, and dated Feb. **3rd**. The Proprietors reserve the right to hold over or suspend the insertion of any advertisement without prejudice to other insertions on order. All communications should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, "Pearson's Weekly" Offices, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Printed and Published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON, LTD., at Pearson's Weekly Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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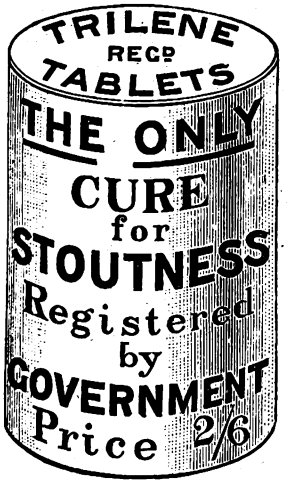
ALL FAT PEOPLE

Can be **CURED** by taking

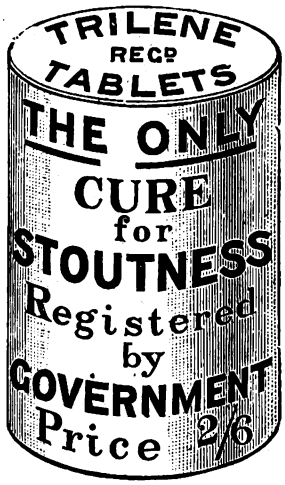
TRILENE TABLETS Regd



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

Send **2s. 6d.** to **THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION**, 66 Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1899.

'Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

MRS. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 6lb., but am now 11st. and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 21lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me. "Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

MRS. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Riseholme Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

MR. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

FATHER T. M. BYRNE, of Holy Cross Abbey, Sligo, writes: "When I began your Tablets I was 12st. 5lb.; I now scale at 10st. 11lb.—my case, too, is hereditary."

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

MR. MCLEOD, 44, Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

MRS. WHITEHOUSE, of Poplar Avenue, Edgbaston, writes: "My husband is in splendid health, and has lost 15lb. in weight since taking the Tablets; I am sure I thank you on his account."

MRS. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

MR. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs, says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mr. BUTLER, Surgeon, M.R.C.V.S., of Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient has lost 1st. in weight whilst taking your Tablets."

MRS E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

MRS. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver nr Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 62 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

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OROCO SOX

A New Invention to keep the feet warm and dry yet allowing perfect ventilation. 18 pairs post free for 4/- State size required. A boon for tender & tired feet

WILL SUIT YOU DOWN TO THE GROUND.

OROCO M'F'G. Co. WIGAN.

IN MAKING, USE LESS QUANTITY, IT BEING SO MUCH STRONGER THAN ORDINARY COFFEE

SOLD EVERY WHERE!

Red White & Blue

Coffee=Delicious for Breakfast & after Dinner.

DON'T HAVE CORNS

BUNIONS or ENLARGED TOE JOINTS, when a packet of

THOMPSON'S CELEBRATED CORN PLASTER

will cure you. It is thin as silk, and removes the pain at once. Post free, 14 stamps, from the Proprietor. Beware of imitations.

LADIES should take **DR. SIMPSON'S ARSENICAL PEARLS.** They secure a beautiful clear complexion, free from Blotch, Pimples and Roughness. Post free, **2/9** and **4/6** only, from M. F. THOMPSON, Homœopathic Chemist, 17 GORDON STREET, GLASGOW.

Ask for Thompson's Pamphlet, "The Woman Beautiful."

"DOLLY" SPECIALITIES.

"DOLLY" CREAM AND TINTS.

"DOLLY" Cream Colour, for Tinting Curtains, Muslins, Laces, Silks, Blouses, etc., a rich Cream Shade.

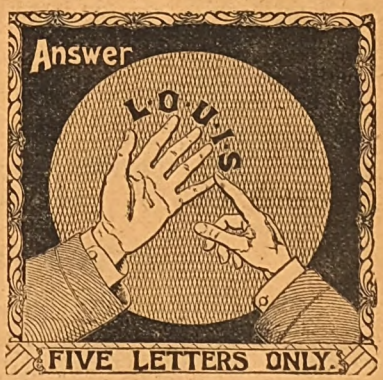
"DOLLY" Tints manufactured in nine shades—Pink, Terra Cotta, Old Gold, Heliotrope, Pea Green, Canary Yellow, Cream, Red, and Blue, for tinting Faded Ribbons, Lace, etc. Sold everywhere, **1d.** per bag. Will wash out when required.

"Dolly" Fast Dyes.

The "Dolly" Dyes are fast on Wool and Cotton alike, and will not wash out or fade. "Dolly" Dyes are not Tints, but are solid Colours, viz.: Black, Brown, Blue, Green, Red, and Maroon. Price, 3d. each Dye. "Dolly" Dyes for Home Dyeing are sold by all Grocers and Oilmen.

WILLIAM EDGE & SONS LTD BOLTON, LANCS.

HOW DO YOU SPELL VELVETEEN?



Don't Forget this when You Buy.

Every Yard is Stamped L-O-U-I-S

ZEBRA GRATE POLISH.

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

£250 FOR TELLING WHEN WE SHALL ENTER PRETORIA.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 577. FOR WEEK ENDING JANUARY 20TH, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

A CHIEF OFFICER AND DR TIBBLES' Vi-Cocoa

"USED IT FOR FOUR YEARS IN HIS NIGHT WATCHES!"

Mr. T. SMITH,
s.s. "New Londoner,"
Newcastle.

"Noticing that many gentlemen are testifying to the sterling quality of Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa, I think it only fair to you that I should add my humble praise. I may state that I am chief officer on a passenger steamer, and have had fifty years' experience of sea life. I have used your Vi-Cocoa for four years in my night watches, and felt immediately refreshed and invigorated for the rest of the watch.

"Make any use you please of this."

Thousands of people have tried Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa with the most satisfactory results. Those who have not done so should write at once to 60, 61, and 62 Bunhill Row, London, E.C., for a free dainty sample tin, which will be forwarded by return of post.

FREEMAN'S PUDDING POWDER
SOLD EVERYWHERE — REALLY DELICIOUS — TRADE MARK
A CHILD CAN MAKE THEM
TRY IT

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THOUSANDS OF LIPS

Tell of the excellence of

NATURE'S OWN BEVERAGE.
NON-INTOXICATING.

MASON'S WINE ESSENCES become famous wherever they go. They are pronounced **The Ideal** by all who try them.

6D. BOTTLE makes **60** GLASSES of the most Delicious Wine. Exquisite flavour and absolute purity. Suitable for all ages. Sample Bottle, post free, 9 stamps.

MASON'S COFFEE ESSENCE is recognised everywhere as the standard of purity. Have you tried it?

SPECIAL OFFER.
Until December 31st, every purchaser of a Sample Bottle of Wine Essence will be presented with a Sample Bottle of our COFFEE ESSENCE and a MONEY BOX.

NEWBALL & MASON, NOTTINGHAM,
Makers of MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS
Agents Wanted.

By Special Appointment Makers to Her Majesty.

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is sold by grocers, oilmen, and stores, everywhere, because it is wanted everywhere.

It is easy to buy, but care is necessary, otherwise, when you come to wash clothes or scour, you will find you have taken a substitute or imitation.

Borax Dry Soap has imitators, and it is right you should know it and guard against them.

Borax Dry Soap is sold in ¼-lb., ½-lb., and 1-lb. packets.

Write for illustrated literature.

The Patent Borax Co., Limited, Ladywood, Birmingham.

No. 56. Facsimile Packet.

ROSY CHEEKS

and a lovely complexion, skin clear as Alabaster, produced by one box of **Dr. LENNOX'S Harmless Arsenic Wafers,** the only cure for Pimples, Blackheads, Sallow or Greasy Skins, no matter how bad. Price per box, privately packed with Medical and Analytical Reports by Dr. Griffiths and Granville Sharpe, F.C.S., 2/6 post free. H. LENNOX, 21 Electric Avenue, Brixton, London. Absolutely harmless to the most delicate. Thousands of testimonials.

THE ONLY EFFICACIOUS SUBSTITUTE FOR COD LIVER OIL.

DEVONSHIRE CREAM

(REALLY GENUINE.)

IN PATENT AIR-TIGHT TINS.

½lb., 1s. 4d.; 1lb., 2s. 4d.; 2lb. 4s.

INCLUDING TIN AND POSTAGE.

Mrs. CONYERS, Morchard Bishop, DEVON.

VARICOCELE.

Men who are weak and suffering from nervous exhaustion, loss of vigour, Varicocele, &c., can be successfully and permanently cured without operation or detention from business by THE DR. COLLINS most improved and rational method medical science has ever yet produced.

Particulars and proofs of successful cures sent free on receipt of address.

THE COLLINS REMEDY CO.,
Gothic House, 9 Erskine Street, Liverpool.

ATLAS LOCKSTITCH MACHINE.

Works by hand or treadle. Guaranteed 4 years. Equal in quality and size to any machine To ensure satisfaction, we will send machine on receipt of 5/- P.O. for ONE MONTH'S TRIAL. Balance can be paid 5/- Monthly. Call or write for designs and Samples of work. **39/-**

THE ATLAS SEWING MACHINE CO.,
188B High St., Camden Town, London, N.W.;
63 Seven Sisters Rd., N.; 14 High Rd., Kilburn.

A MAGNIFICENT COMPLEXION GUARANTEED

By the free use of LILLIE POWDER. It nourishes, heals, soothes, and brings Health and Beauty.

Prepared from the original recipe invented by Mrs. Langtry, under the strict supervision of Her Majesty's Perruquier, Mr. W. Clarkson.

Order it of your Chemist and refuse all substitutes, as they may be injurious.

Three Tints: Blanche Naturelle, and Rachel. Of all Chemists, Hairdressers, Stores, &c.

THE LILLIE SYNDICATE,
3 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

EPPS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

HAIR DESTROYED.

Send me an envelope (stamped and addressed) and I will tell you how to remove all superfluous hair **free of charge.** (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Miss E. V. (Room 3), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

NOSE

MACHINES. LEES RAY, S. S. Dept., South Castle St. Liverpool, is a specialist on Ugly and Red Noses. Send stamp for particulars of his patent scientific Nose Improvers. Red Nose Cure, medically approved, 3/9. Outstanding Ear Machines, 11/6.

WHY BE FAT?

When a lady, who has discovered a simple means of Self-Cure will be happy to send particulars of same to any sufferer from this distressing complaint. Free on receipt of stamped addressed envelope. ADDRESS:

Mrs. TREVOR WELLS,
63 *HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON, W.C.*

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane London.

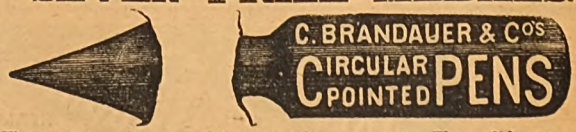
INVESTED FUNDS

£10,000,000.

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.

FRANCIS RAVENSCROFT, *Manager.*

SEVEN PRIZE MEDALS.



These series of pens neither scratch nor spurt. They glide over the roughest paper with the ease of a soft lead pencil. An assorted sample box for 7 stamps from the works, Birmingham.

SHORT STORIES

No. 577.] [One Penny.

For the Week Ending January 20th, 1900.

A Fiery Engagement.

"Are you enjoying yourself, Kitty?"

"Not in the least," said Kitty disdainfully.

"Then, my dear, forgive me for saying so—but you are a very stupid girl."

After which conclusive remark Colonel Lambourne jerked the off rein of his mule impatiently, and subsequently avoided a precipice with some difficulty, which effectually chilled his ardent annoyance.

Colonel Lambourne and his daughter were ascending Etna from the little village of Nicolosi below the volcano. He was commanding a regiment in Malta, and she had been brought to Sicily at immense inconvenience, so her father said, to throw off the effects of a love affair.

It was a little late for making the grand ascent, and Salvator, the guide, had been at first a little unwilling to escort them; but he had in the end yielded to pressure.

Below them lay the wide panorama of the Bay of Messina, blue as lapis lazuli, the shadowed mountains of Calabria, and the stretch of chestnut woods through which they had passed. Before them was the Valley of Desolation, that reach of black lava that corresponds to one of Dante's circles of the Inferno. The mules, jerking in their ungainly fashion from boulder to

EDITED BY C. Arthur Pearson

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boulder, had almost struggled through the last vestige of vegetation, the bracken and broom, already changing to another and more autumnal tint. High up, below the last thousand feet of the crater, lay the little Casa Inglese, the hut of refuge where the travellers sleep, and where the Italian professor of astronomy keeps watch and ward for an appointed time in the year, coming out with the bats at night in the dead stillness where there is no sound save the creak of the great telescope as it gyrates from star to star.

It was reddening with the last sunset glow, and about half a mile before them the black figure of a solitary traveller was plodding his way across the plain.

"It's a relief to see someone," said Colonel Lambourne testily. "The confounded loneliness of the place would make a cat fret."

"I like it, it suits my mood," said Kitty tersely.

"Then your mood must be a confoundedly queer one," snapped her father, and silence fell between them.

The mood of neither father nor daughter was in touch with the majesty of the great ascent, as the Sicilians call it—but the shadow of Douglas Grant lay between them, and the thought of that impecunicus captain of a marching regiment was not soothing to the mind of Colonel Lambourne.

Suddenly, without the least warning, the guide started back and caught the head of Kitty's mule, jabbering something in excited Sicilian that neither understood.

"What the dickens is the fellow about? What is it, Kitty? What was the use of keeping you at an expensive school? Good Heavens!"

The last ejaculation was wrung from him in genuine terror, as the ground apparently heaved up under his feet, and the mule collapsed into a frightened heap in a clump of bracken.

"What is it, Kitty?"

But Salvator had dragged Miss Lambourne from her mule, and was pulling her down behind a rock boulder with a gesture of frightened determination.

The last ejaculation was wrung from him in genuine terror, as the ground apparently heaved up under his feet, and the mule collapsed into a frightened heap in a clump of bracken.

Colonel Lambourne said no more—there was no need for words, since in another moment he became absolutely certain that they were in the midst of one of those convulsions of nature so horrible to contemplate—a volcanic eruption.

The darkness fell with a blinding suddenness that was like a pall, relieved now and again by a flash of lightning, and a roll of thunder that echoed among the lonely, silent hills, scaring the very wild beasts from their lair.

Looking up over the edge of his shelter, Colonel Lambourne saw that his daughter was close at hand, and that she had instinctively thrown her arms round a jutting ledge of rock, while Salvator was endeavouring to tether the frightened mules. Above them the crater suddenly flared into living lurid flame, and he shivered as he saw burning lumps of lava, belching out from the black mouth, hurled down the slope towards them in a rain of fire.

"Kitty," he cried.

"Yes, papa," she answered.

"I don't think we shall ever come out of this alive."

"God knows," said Kitty. And he took sudden comfort from her steady voice.

He only spoke once again in the course of the next half-hour.

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"Kitty—Kitty, I wish that you had married Grant—and that we had never attempted to ascend this dreadful mountain."

"It is a little late to think of that, father dear."

And the Colonel groaned dismally.

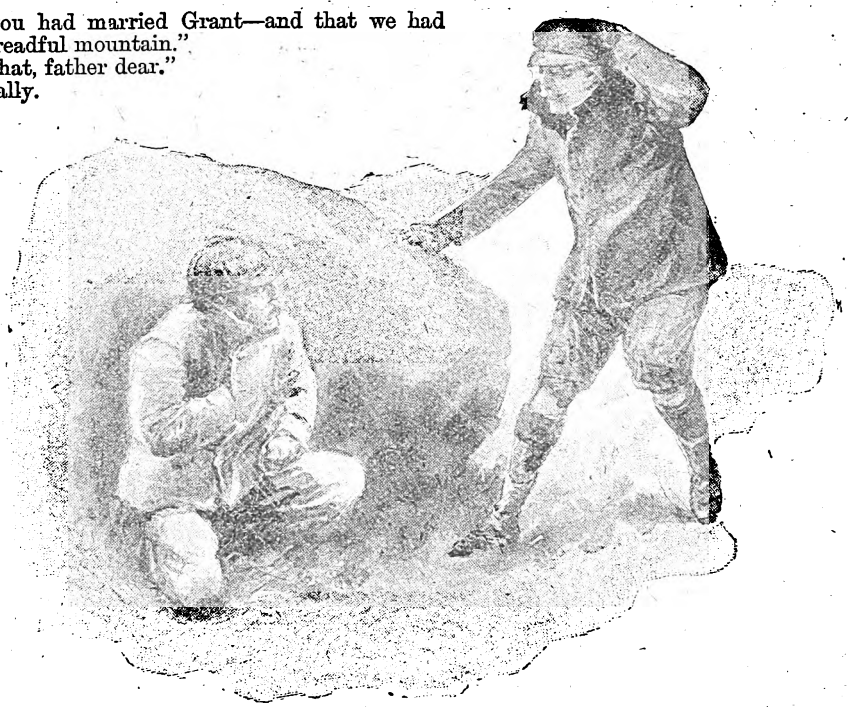
It seemed to him that they had crouched there for many hours in that horrible suspense when there was a cry from Salvator.

The wind had risen, and it was all that they could do to sustain their foothold upon the boulders, although Kitty was the more sheltered of the two.

The guide had taken up his position near the mules, and at some distance from the Lambournes, and his situation being somewhat exposed, he had been struck by a falling mass of rock—a huge block which was whirling by, with considerable force.

"Oh, Santa Maria!"

To the Colonel's horror, he saw his daughter move from her secure shelter at the cry, and make her way over to the Sicilian with a Divine impulse of pity. Her change of position took her completely out of sight into the darkness, and the Colonel remained clinging to his rock spur in a pitifully broken condition of despair and terror.



"Colonel Lambourne, if I go after your daughter it will be at the risk of my own life, and I shall demand a certain *quid pro quo*. I do not see why I should risk my life to save yours, to put the matter on a strictly business footing."

The sound of a voice behind him was like that of an angel from Heaven.

"Colonel Lambourne, is it you in reality? I have been all this time making my way down here—I had to cross the plain on my hands and knees. I saw that there was a lady in the party, and I thought I might be of some use."

"Grant! Oh, thank Heaven," said the elder man with a sob. "This is horrible. Kitty has gone—the guide was hurt, and she went after him into the darkness. If she is killed, I shall never dare to go home and face her mother."

There was something so supremely selfish in the attitude of the whole man that Douglas Grant may be forgiven if the thought flashed across his mind of turning the situation to his own advantage. He had struggled after the party at the risk of his life, over the exposed plain.

Being a man of no small resource, he had timed his ascent of Etna well, and though out of sight had kept in touch with the Lambournes' movements since they had left Malta. Now he stood disdainfully peering down through the darkness at the white face below him.

He was a man to whom fear was an unknown quality, and it seemed comtemptible to him that where Kitty's safety was concerned anyone should dare to know a qualm of selfish terror.

He steadied himself against the hurly-burly of the wind, and spoke clearly.

"Colonel Lambourne, if I go after your daughter, it will be at the risk of my own life and I shall demand a certain *quid pro quo*; I do not see why I should risk my life to save yours, to put the matter on a strictly business footing."

He hated himself for the horrible attitude he had assumed. His golden-haired Kitty was in danger of her life, and he dared to barter and hesitate even for a moment. She was wandering on the mountain side, her foot perhaps on the brink of one of those precipitous crevices that are formed from the treacherous lava streams. A slip might mean destruction, and he was still hesitating—but this was his chance in life, and in spite of himself he took it.

"I suppose you want Kitty?" said the Colonel, dully. "That is the only *quid pro quo* possible."

"Yes, I want Kitty."

"Look here, Grant, have you such a thing as a flask about you?"

Grant nodded, but made no further movement towards his pocket.

"You shall have Kitty," said Lambourne jerkily, as though the words were torn from him against his will. "Give me the flask."

And Grant, tossing the silver and crystal flagon, full of brandy, into his lap, leaped the boulder, and disappeared into the darkness.

* * * * *

It seemed to Colonel Lambourne that some hours must have passed since he drank that life-giving, courage-reviving draught, and felt comforted to the bottom of his soul.

When he woke at last from an agreeable doze, he found that the eruption had ceased as suddenly as it had begun, and that above him, in a clear heaven, the stars were shining. The crater was not entirely inactive, but

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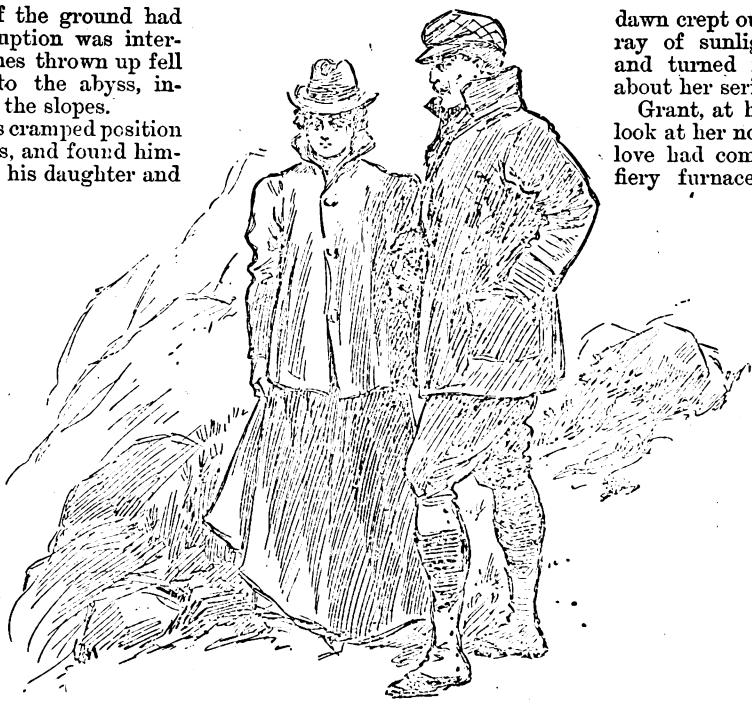
the awful heaving of the ground had ceased; the lava eruption was intermittent, and the stones thrown up fell back harmlessly into the abyss, instead of bombarding the slopes.

He moved from his cramped position at the sound of voices, and found himself face to face with his daughter and Grant, who were coming over the rocks towards him hand in hand.

One glance at Kitty's face told him that her night upon the mountain side had not been one entirely of terror for her, and coming up to her father, she took his hand.

"Poor father," she said gently, "I am so sorry that you were frightened. Douglas says that it is quite safe to move up to the Casa Inglese now. Salvator is better, he was only stunned; and we can get him some food up there before going back to Nicolosi."



Kitty and her lover stood looking down at the sunlit valley with a prayer of thanksgiving in their hearts.

Grant cast one look at the flask with an eye to the prostrate guide.

"There is a drop or two in the bottom, I think," said the Colonel feebly, holding it out towards him. "I wonder what your mother will say, Kitty?"

But Kitty had no thought for any trouble to come, as she mounted her mule again, and turned her face towards the sun-rising. The first faint flush of the dawn crept out of the East, and a ray of sunlight caught her hair and turned it to glittering gold about her serious face.

Grant, at her bridle-rein, cast a look at her now and again. Their love had come to them out of a fiery furnace indeed, and might perchance be all the more steadfast in the memory of that night face to face with death.

When they reached the little house, the Italian Professor, grey and dishevelled after his night of anxiety, looked out of the window to wish them good morning. "My faith," he said, "it is always the unexpected that happens, and the Barometer gave very short warning—I gave you up for lost long ago."

"I should have thought the world well lost for love," whispered Grant, as he lifted Kitty from her mule, while Colonel Lambourne went inside the hut to boast to the professor, in execrable Italian, of the courage and fortitude he had displayed under superhuman difficulties.

But Kitty and her lover stood looking down at the sunlit valley with a prayer of thanksgiving in their hearts.

C. E. C. WEIGALL.

SCOGGS: "Where is your better half?"

BOGGS: "Got the sulks and wouldn't come. In fact, just at present, she's my bitter half."

"I SHALL not go out of that door, sir," said the angry subscriber, "until I have had an explanation."

"Oh, all right," responded the editor. "The window is just as handy."

MRS. KNERVZ rang the bell for the domestic. "Norah," she said when the kitchen lady appeared, "I'll feed the canary myself after this. The doctor says I must take more exercise."

LITTLE JOHNNY: "Mamma, let's play I am your mother and you are my little boy."

Mamma: "Very well, dear; how shall we play it?"

Little Johnny: "I'll tell you; you start to do something and I'll tell you not to."

SHE: "Why does a woman take a man's name when she gets married?"

He: "Why does she take everything else he has?"

"How absurd to say that all the world loves a lover!"

"Isn't it true?"

"Certainly not. How can it be true so long as the lover usually has rivals?"

MOTHER: "What are you doing with papa's hair-restorer?"

Ethel: "Willie and I are going to make your moth-eaten muff as good as new."

"How did those two delightful young people happen to drift apart?"

"Most natural thing in the world. He was after a heart, and she after a bank account. Time developed the fact that neither of them had what the other wanted."

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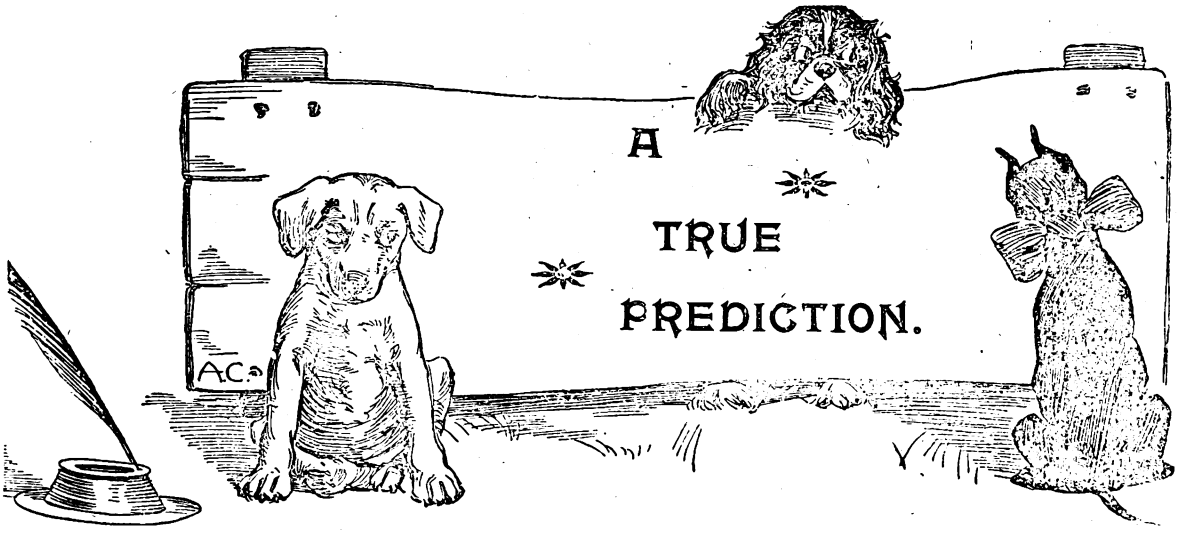

"You cannot tell my fortune. May I ask why?" he demanded.

The gipsy shook her head.

"But I have entered this tent for that special purpose," said Captain Murray, and he laid his hands upon the table with their palms uppermost.

"I cannot do it," came in something like a gasp from the draped figure.

"You mean that you won't do it?"

No answer.

A look of annoyance passed over his face, followed by one of something approaching alarm, but it was momentary. He looked at his hands and then at the gipsy.

"Look here," he ventured again, "I am not a fool. It is plain to me that you see something in my hand which you prefer not to speak about—which you think it better that I should not know?"

The veiled figure bowed in affirmation.

Captain Murray glanced round the tent somewhat cautiously, as if afraid of listeners. "Madame," he began earnestly, "I insist upon you telling me. I come from a superstitious race—a clan that in days gone by placed great faith in the warnings of people like yourself. I am not exactly a believer in your art, but there are traditions in my family of such predictions as, I fancy, you would keep from me. I may say I am ordered abroad. If your prediction has to do with my career as a soldier——"

"You leave next Tuesday," she interrupted.

"Yes, a week to-day; but you seek to change the topic of conversation. At the same time, I am puzzled to know how you should have become acquainted with my affairs."

"Am I not a fortune-teller?"

"By profession, yes. But whether you have the powers you claim is another question."

"Test me," she answered somewhat defiantly.

"That is what I am anxious to do, but you refuse. Perhaps you can tell me where I am going?"

"Certainly I can; such questions are easy. You are going to South Africa, and you got the news last week. What is more you are going in the place of another man who has met with a bicycle accident."

"Of course, you may have learnt all this in the town," he said. "But we are getting away on a side issue. Tell me what you were afraid to disclose a minute ago. I do not believe in your art, but I am curious."

"For an unbeliever you appear to be very much in earnest."

"If your prediction proves true you may make a disciple."

"But I am not anxious to make disciples. Please do not press me. I would rather you did not ask me to tell your fortune."

"Well, I fear I must insist upon it." There was just a little hardness in his voice. "I have bought this ticket against my will, but, having invested in it, I am determined to have my money's worth. You see I am Scotch."

The gipsy remained silent.

"You mean it well, no doubt, and possibly think I am afraid to hear bad news," he continued.

No answer.

"Very well. I do not leave this tent until you carry out the terms of the contract, so your lucrative trade must come to a stop until my fortune is told. I will not budge from here, and if you leave I follow you." He folded his arms with the resolute air of a man who has put his foot down.

There was a silence, and he amused himself by examining various articles in the tent, until a clamour arose outside.

"Hurry up! Hurry up! Are you going to stay all day?" shouted a masculine voice. "You must have had your half-guinea's worth by now."

Captain Murray got up and walked to the entrance of the tent.

"My fortune is not told yet," he called out. "In fact, the fortune-teller is at present on strike—or rather we are engaged in a game of patience."

Without paying further heed to their murmurs of disapproval he came back to his seat opposite the mutinous gipsy.

"I believe gipsies do not object to smoking," he said, "but if you would rather that I did not— No? Very well, then," as the figure shook itself. "I will light up. Can I offer you one?"

An indignant shake of a cloak was the only reply. There followed another interval of silence.

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"Palm or cards?" she demanded suddenly, as her patience gave out.

"Both," was his brief reply, and he spread out his palms, which she examined through a glass.

"Shuffle!" she said, passing him the cards. "Now cut into three. Wealth, happiness, and an engagement," she began. "Really your fortune opens better than I expected from your hand. Let me see, we will make you clubs—club king."

Then she began to spread out the cards on the table, pausing every now and then as she carefully placed each card. She drew her cloak tightly around her.

"Why do you place them so?" he asked. "I thought the cards had to be spread out in the order they come after cutting."

"I will tell your fortune, sir, but allow me to retain the secrets of our craft. Be good enough to show me your palms again," she demanded with an air of pretty authority.

"You have chosen the right profession—that of soldier—but you are pessimistic. Try and get out of the habit of taking a dark view of things, for this may some day interfere with what ought to be a well-developed judgment. Keep a guard upon your temper, which is hasty and inclined to lead you into trouble."

Then she turned to the cards again.

"There is some present trouble or annoyance. Spades seem to hound you. It has to do with a fair woman."

He leaned forward and listened eagerly.

"The fault seems to rest with you. I see what it is. You look dark towards another man, who, in turn, looks at the fair lady; but she turns her back upon him. You are jealous. Three of clubs between you and a blonde man. Spade—spade, club again. Your attachment to the fair lady has not ended happily; in fact, the engagement looks as if it were broken off."

"Yes, yes, go on," he said somewhat impatiently, as she paused.

"You have misjudged this fair lady, for you fancy she is in love with the blonde man."

"So she is!" he jerked out.

"Sir!"

"Oh! I beg pardon. Please go on. This is very foolish, I know, but interesting."

"You can see by the cards that she is not in love with him, for there are no love cards between them."

"Are you sure?" he asked gravely.

"Quite. See here," and she laid her hand on the king of hearts, which stood for his rival. "Only light cards are between her and the fair man. The breaking of the engagement causes her sorrow—spades again, you see."

"By Heaven, is that so?" he asked earnestly.

He put his finger down on the king of clubs. "Isn't that I?"

"Yes," said the gipsy, "and as you see the love cards still cling to you and the fair lady."

"And that means that she loves me?" he asked excitedly.

"She loves you," repeated the gipsy. "There is no doubt about that."

Captain Murray thought a moment. "I wish I knew for certain—it would mean a great difference to me," he said. "Look here. I am afraid I am a bit superstitious. It is in the blood, for I am a Highlander. Your sex—your race is very clever. Give me your advice. I am, or was, engaged to the dearest girl in all the world. A month ago a cousin of her's came to stay with them. He is rather a lady's man, and I fancied that Marjory—I mean the young lady to whom I was engaged—was just a little too free with him. Three nights ago my stupid jealousy got the better of me, and I said what I had no business to say. My little girl was very independent and handed me back my ring. Now I have to go away, and I am feeling wretched. I would go and apologise, but to be repulsed would drive me mad. Yet I have been a ruffian, if what the cards say be true."

"Especially as she still loves you," said the gipsy softly.

"If I were only sure of that—but there are only the cards for it, and it's all very foolish to trust to them. No, I am done for, unless you can suggest something."

"I can only tell you that she loves you dearly."

"But you have only the cards to show that." He was pacing up and down the tent now.

"I have another proof that what I say is true."

"You have?" he stopped shortly. "Speak woman. Speak!" he cried excitedly.

"Hurry up! Hurry up!" shouted those outside.

"Come nearer to me," she said softly. "You know Marjory was just a little to blame."

"No, she wasn't," he jerked out with a snap.

"Don't contradict me."

The veiled figure arose and placed her hand upon his arm.

"You must not reveal a word of this to anyone, but within the next five minutes or less you will kiss Marjory."

He glanced at the mysterious hooded figure.

"I would make a handsome donation to this bazaar, if I thought she would kiss me within the next year," he said gloomily.

Then her hold upon his wrist lightened, she stood upon her tip toes and whispered one word in his ear. In a second her disguise was torn off, his arms were about her, and her head nestled on his shoulder.

"Marjory, darling, I came to this bazaar purposely to get a glimpse of you. I wondered why you were not here, and I dared not ask anyone."

At this moment the clamorous crowd outside, unable to restrain their impatience longer, broke into the tent, but the fortune telling was over for that day.

ATHOL FORBES.

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Lunch for Two, at the Reindeer.

One pleasant morning in May, the housekeeper's bell at 13 Grafton Place, Piccadilly, was rung by a man, whose manner, despite the absence of uniform, had a suggestion of "peeler" about it. He was Inspector Barton, of New Scotland Yard; and his companion was Sergeant Fleming.

"There's a gentleman lives here, name of Wilson, isn't there?"

"Yes; there is."

Wilson's real name was Nosovich, and he was wanted by the police. His extradition had been demanded by the Russian Government, on the ground of having defrauded an Odessa bank of the sum of 80,000 roubles. Barton, however, didn't tell the housekeeper this.

"Not lived here long, has he?"

"Not long. Two months only."

"H'm, just corresponds. Is he anything like that?"

He handed the housekeeper a photograph, which she inspected.

"Well, he—yes, he is like this. But he's got no moustache."

The Inspector was prepared for a trifling discrepancy of that kind.

"No moustache, eh! What rooms does he occupy?"

The housekeeper explained—a suite on the first floor.

"Mr. Wilson in now, do you know?"

"I fancy so. He generally is about this time." It was then half-past ten.

Inspector Barton and his companion went upstairs, but there were told a different tale. Mr. Wilson was out—had gone out just before ten. Tovey, his man, proved rather uncommunicative.

"How's he gone—driving, riding, or how?"

"I couldn't say, sir. I was at the back when he started."

"And you don't know where he's gone to?"

Tovey shook his head. "I don't."

"When will he be back, then—did he say?"

Tovey made a sly scrutiny of the inspector before replying. "I don't think he'll be long, sir. He'd have told me in that case."

The valet was a different kind of subject from Mrs. Luck; being as foxey as the latter was ingenuous. Inspector Barton concluded promptly that Tovey was not telling the truth—or not the whole truth; and, further, that his own character and mission were suspected by the man.

"The fellow's in league with his master," he whispered to Fleming. "Wonder if they've had a hint of our visit?"

"It's quite possible."

"In that case Nosovich has decamped, and the soone we get on his track the better."

Nosovich had been "wanted" since February, and had been hunted for in vain in half the capitals of Europe. It was an anonymous letter, received at New Scotland Yard that morning, which put the English authorities on his track.

Accomplice or no, it was clear Tovey was right: Wilson was not in. Where had he gone—that was the question?

Tovey knew, but wouldn't tell—so Barton concluded. Mrs. Luck, when appealed to again, said she hadn't noticed Mr. Wilson's departure. It seemed as if the detectives had lost the scent.

At the corner of the first turning was a fishmonger's. Inspector Barton stopped here a moment, to pick up information.

"Know anything of a Mr. Wilson, at No. 13?"

"Oh, yes. Serve him with fish."

"Don't happen to have seen him this morning—do you?"

Spragg didn't; but an assistant, who was by, could give some information. Mr. Wilson had driven off in a dog-cart about ten o'clock.

"In a dog-cart, eh?"

"Yes, one of Scroggie's. Scroggie's man brought it to the door."

Scroggie was a livery-stable keeper, well-known in that region. The assistant further stated that the vehicle went off by way of Piccadilly, but of course he couldn't supply the destination. Barton made his way to Scroggie's yard, to prosecute inquiries there.

"Where to, sir? He's gone to Whittenham—Whittenham-on-Thames, close by Hampton Court."

"So he said, I s'pose."

"Well, yes—so he said; and I'm inclined to think it's right. If you were to look in at the 'Reindeer' about half-past one; I guess you'd find him having lunch."

Scroggie went on to explain. Whittenham was a newly-discovered haunt, just then the fashion with a certain class—theatrical people, and their hangers-on. He was constantly letting out vehicles to go there.

It was a pleasant drive from London—about sixteen miles; had a comfortable, old-fashioned inn—the one he'd mentioned; and to suit people who were fond of trees it boasted a clump of beeches which hadn't their equal in England.

Gradually, as Scroggie spoke, the Inspector came to the conclusion he was right. Wilson probably had gone there; and gone on pleasure bent. In which case it followed the embezzler must be still in ignorance of the fact that Scotland Yard was looking him up.

Sergeant Fleming had been left behind at No. 13 to carry out a search. Returning there for a moment,

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Barton made a discovery. Tovey, the valet, had taken himself off.

"Said he was going to the corner for a drink," volunteered Fleming. "I'm pretty sure, though, he's vamoosed. He had the look of it."

There! Tovey was a confederate. Suspected before, the fact was now clear. Vamoosed—in order to warn his master!

It was a case for prompt action; the very promptest. Barton telegraphed to Whittenham, asking that the Reindeer might be watched, and followed his wire by the first train; which deposited him at Whittenham Station shortly after one o'clock.

* * * * *

No one was more surprised than William Poppleton, landlord, when his house suddenly became a resort for visitors. He was not a pushing man, hadn't advertised himself in any way, and knew next to nothing of theatres. It was luck—pure luck—which brought it about.

Poppleton tried gallantly to rise to the occasion. When parties came, he took pains to give them just what they wanted. And in order to be able to exchange remarks, and know who was who, he began to study the theatrical news in the papers.

He was deep in the *Daily Twaddler* on this particular morning, shortly after 11 a.m. An ambitious piece, *The Planter's Daughter*, had been produced the night before, and Mr. Bernard Clement Archer (the *Twaddler's* critic) had let himself out on it to the extent of a column and a half. Mr. B. C. A's conclusions were that the piece might succeed—if the public took to it; and that, anyhow, Mark Murdock's acting, in the part of Gomez, was the finest thing the stage had seen for half a generation.

"Must go to see Murdock," Poppleton murmured. "New name to me—don't think I've heard it before."

There was a slight commotion at the front. A gentleman had driven up in a dog-cart; being the first to arrive that morning, Poppleton hastened to the door.

"This way, sir. What would you like? Glass of sherry, sir—yes, sir."

Poppleton himself served the guest. The dog-cart was taken round to the stable-yard, and the horse, a chestnut, was attended to. The gentleman remarked that he would like some lunch—about half-past one.

Poppleton scrutinised him with interest. The gentleman had a slightly commanding manner, as if he felt conscious of being somebody. His smooth face and a certain mobility of expression suggested he might be an actor. He was new, however, to the Reindeer, and Poppleton speculated in vain as to his indentity.

"Here's a paper, sir, if you'd like to see it. Long account of *The Planter's Daughter*, at the St. Martin's. Piece seems hardly to have been a success."

Poppleton's tone was genial. There could be no doubt he intended to please. Nevertheless, the gentleman didn't seem quite to catch on.

"Oh, thanks. I've read it already."

He *was* an actor—must be. Poppleton wondered all the more what he might be called.

Coming back into the room after an absence, he found the gentleman—despite this surly response—deep in the critique in question. He was studying closely, intently; but on noticing Poppleton's return, threw the sheet aside with an impatient snort.

"I want a couple of miles walk somewhere," the guest remarked. "Can you recommend a pleasant round—quiet lanes or field-paths, for preference?"

"Oh, yes." Poppleton suggested a route. "That'll bring you back through the Beeches, on your way home."

"Beeches?" The gentleman seemed not to understand. "Ah, I remember. You have some fine trees here, haven't you?"

Poppleton felt hurt. That one should refer to the famous clump in that casual fashion! The speaker must be a foreigner, surely—no Englishman could be so ignorant.

He drank up his sherry, callously, ungraciously—and started out. There was something about him Poppleton didn't like. He seemed moody, oppressed, preoccupied—like one who waits his doom; waits, and has to wait, and can't avert it. The landlord ceased to feel quite so confident that the gentleman was a man of note.

Other guests came in, the next being a lady and gentleman; lady played Yoshi-san in "*Japan Up-to-Date*"; gentleman was a friend. Both were gay and chatty. Being kept busy welcoming arrivals, and attending to the wants of customers, Poppleton soon dropped all thought of the first comer.

A few minutes after twelve, however, he was called apart by P. C. Welch, who looked after the morals of Whittenham. Welch and Poppleton knew each other well, so there was no need for beating about the bush.

"I'm after a gentleman called Wilson," said the constable. "He started from London about ten o'clock, in a dog-cart, chestnut horse. Has he turned up here?"

"Wilson!" The worthy host knew no one of that name; but—well, it might be that stranger who came along first.

"Calls himself Wilson, I should say. His right name's Nosovich—he's a Russian. Wanted for a big job of embezzling money."

Russian—foreigner! Why, of course! That first arrival was the man.

"Come this way, has he?" queried Poppleton in a non-committal tone. "What's he like—have you a description?"

P. C. Welch repeated such particulars as he knew. Tall, dark, clean-shaven, muscular build. Whew! Every particular corresponded.

"Came in a dog-cart, I think you said?" Poppleton was almost convinced.

"Well, he started from London in a dog-cart. Chestnut horse, white stocking on off hind leg."

Chestnut, with white stocking! There was no further room for doubt. Poppleton, a judge of horses, a keen observer of equine peculiarities, had noticed this very circumstance.

"Right, constable; I've got him here. You've come to the right shop."

"He *is* here?"

Poppleton gave an affirmative jerk. "Dropped in about half-past eleven."

The situation was discussed at large. It was clear Wilson had no suspicion he was being followed. His lunch had been ordered for half-past one, by or before which time he might be expected back; and by or before that time, Inspector Barton would himself come on the scene. In the circumstances, Welch felt justified in adopting a policy of masterly inactivity.

They turned up almost together, Wilson and the Inspector, shortly after one. Poppleton performed his part by taking Wilson aside. "Party to see you, sir. This way, please." And having conducted Wilson to the chamber where Barton awaited him, mine host retreated to the dining-room.

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There he found Miss Yoshi-san seated disconsolately alone.

"My friend has gone back to London," she pouted. "Called away on urgent business. Isn't it a shame?"

"And left you to return by yourself?"

"Oh, he's gone by train. His man is here, and will drive me back to town."

Curious occurrences never come singly. It was distinctly unusual to have a Scotland Yard Inspector on the premises; and it was equally out of the common for a gentleman who came to lunch at the Reindeer to be called away on business just before the meal was ready.

Inspector Barton, in the private room, didn't find it all plain sailing. The suspect showed surprise at being tackled, and burst into a decisive laugh:

"My name isn't Wilson—nor Nosovich either. You're on the wrong tack. I don't know how the mistake's arisen, but you're wrong."

Barton was prepared for a denial, and took it equably. He manœuvred so as to get between his captive and the door, and producing the photograph studied the man's features.

The result was satisfactory. Plus moustache—which altered the facial aspect—he felt sure the man before him would look just like the one in the photo.

"Oh, indeed! And what *do* you call yourself?"

The Inspector's tone was provoking, and the captive began to get angry. "I call myself Murdock—Mark Murdock. Perhaps you've heard of me?" He finished up quite sarcastically.

The sarcasm was lost on Barton, who was not theatrical. Irving he knew, and Toole—also Penley and Arthur Roberts; but Murdock. He shook his head.

"Can't say I have. No—I think I shall have to trouble you to return to town with me."

The suspect argued, expostulated, and threatened; but as he couldn't produce any conclusive evidence of his identity, the Inspector treated it all as bluff. Barton would make no further concession than that, as lunch had been ordered, it might be partaken of, before starting.

Meanwhile, a complication was brewing in a different quarter. The ostler had been quietly told that the chestnut with the white stocking on the off hind leg was under an embargo. He now came in to whisper to Poppleton that the gentleman's man-servant had arrived and wanted it prepared for going back.

Poppleton went down to the stable. The newcomer was Tovey, and he was unaware of the doings within the hotel. Poppleton sharply demanded on whose behalf he was acting.

"I belong to Mr. Wilson. He came down here with a lady. I'm to drive her back to town."

"Wilson! Why, why——"

"He's been called away, on urgent business. Lady's inside, having lunch."

Tovey was clear-headed enough, and told a straight tale. The landlord felt obfuscated, bewildered.

Chestnut horse, white stocking etc; the animal corresponded exactly with the police description. But—eh? what about the horse driven by that first arrival: by the man who was now in Inspector Barton's charge?

Poppleton turned sharply on the ostler. "Isn't this the horse that first gentleman brought? Where's that? Where've you put that?"

It was *not* the first arrival's property. The ostler pointed that out. It also was a chestnut, and it also had a white stocking—but on the *near* hind leg. Oh, oh! the two markings had been confused. Poppleton, by the way, had been engaged when the second comer drove up, and missed seeing his turn-out. It was news to him that the "gees" were so much alike.

A flash of insight lit up Poppleton's mind. The man wanted was the second who arrived—the one with Miss Yoshi-san. Horse and vehicle corresponded, and—yes, the face corresponded, too—yes, undoubtedly. He had picked up the lady on his way; her presence had shielded him from suspicion; and now he had flown.

Once started on this tack, Poppleton tumbled to the position without difficulty. That call on urgent business meant that Wilson had been warned. Why of course! The real criminal had got away, and the gentleman under detention was—somebody else.

Poppleton hastened to the dining-room, where he found the Inspector and his captive in close proximity. The latter was angrily disposing of lunch. Miss Yoshi-san, who sat opposite, seemed by her glances to recognise him.

"There's a mistake on," whispered Poppleton. "Just come over here."

Barton obeyed—warily; and the landlord led him to the side of the actress.

"Would you mind telling us who it was, you came with! We want to know particularly."

Yoshi-san gave a good-humoured laugh.

"Why, of course; he's Mr. Wilson."

The Inspector opened his eyes. "Of 13, Grafton Place, Piccadilly?"

"Yes, that's it."

Jerusalem! The mistake was evident.

"You've got the wrong chap, Inspector. Wilson is off—back to London, or somewhere."

Barton was promptly put in possession of the facts. Wilson had received a message; and his man now down in the stable-yard was apparently the person who'd brought it.

His man—Tovey! It was Tovey who'd warned him. Barton saw it all in a glimpse.

Who, then, was this gentleman he'd got. He took out the photograph again; the features didn't seem, now, quite to correspond.

Yoshi-san heard their whisperings, and volunteered a statement. "Don't you know him? I can tell you who he is."

"Can you? Who?"

"He's Mark Murdock, the actor. He made a great hit at the 'St. Martin's,' last night."

There was nothing more to be said. It was a case for backing out—and looking pleasant. Inspector Barton made profuse apologies, which Murdock accepted grimly; and the latter's detention came to an end.

Wilson, for the time, had got clear; and being warned, it might not be easy to capture him. Barton however, promptly addressed himself to the task; as a preliminary measure laying hands on the Russian's accomplice—the crafty, long-headed—Tovey. It was not, though, till some three weeks later that the principal culprit was laid by the heels.

Mr. Mark Murdock finished his lunch in peace, and good-naturedly endeavoured to restore Poppleton to an easy frame of mind. That he didn't bear malice or take his arrest to heart was shown by the fact of his offering to convoy Miss Yoshi-san back to "Babylon"; an offer she smilingly accepted.

RIVINGTON PYKE.

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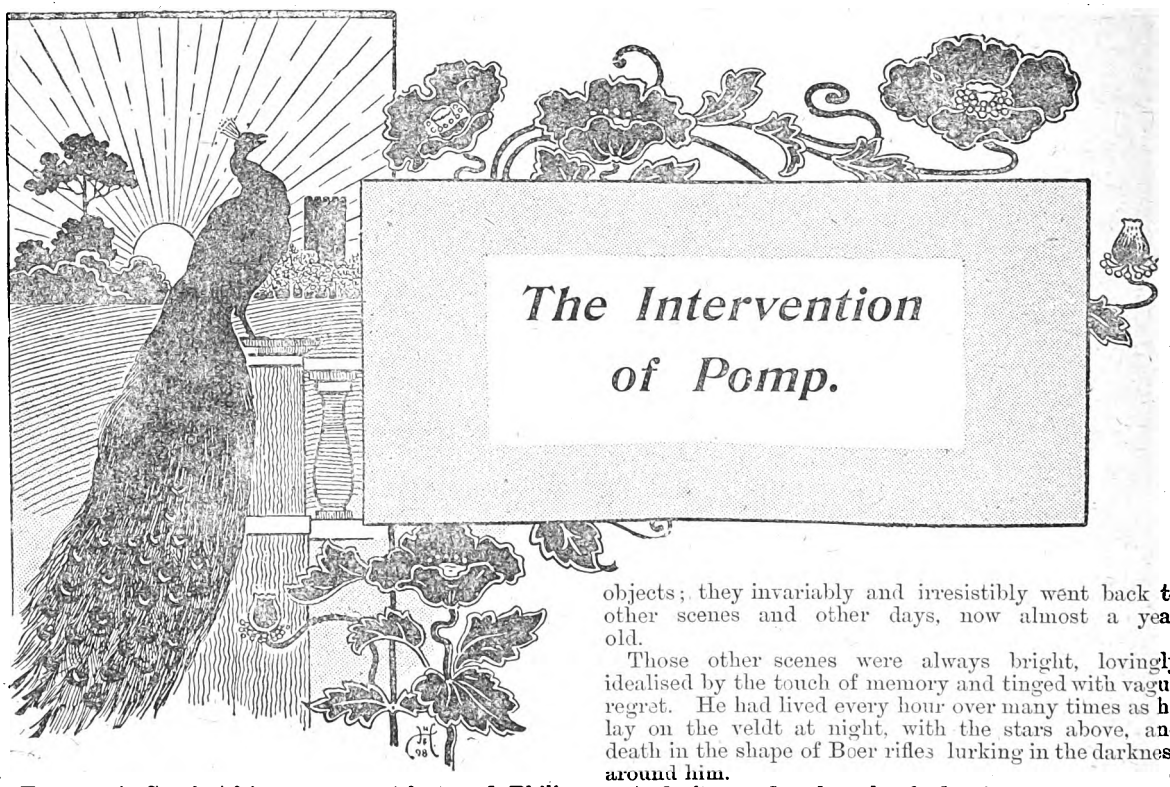

The Intervention of Pomp.

THE war in South Africa was over at last, and Philip Heaton was unfeignedly glad to see London again. Heaton's regiment, the — Hussars had acquitted themselves in a manner creditable to the traditions of the corps, and he himself had performed a conspicuous act of reckless bravery.

This latter had brought him his V.C. and something else as well, in the shape of a two months' sojourn in hospital, and afterwards a long convalescence.

He was still in the latter stage as, slowly and rather painfully, he strolled along one of the paths in the neighbourhood of Rotten Row. Presently the weariness increased, and, selecting a chair, he sat down with a sigh of relief and began to watch the gay crowds and whirling carriages thronging London's playground.

But the brilliant pageant failed to arouse any interest in Heaton's breast, and after a few moments of fruitless effort he closed his eyes and amused himself with self-analysation.

"I suppose I ought to feel grateful," he thought; "other men would. A company and the V.C. at twenty-six is something to be thankful for, but I'm not. I wonder—— It's that I suppose," he muttered rather wearily.

"I thought South Africa would have erased that episode from the slate, but it hasn't, quite. After all, was I in the wrong? I should have made allowances, been a bit gentler, perhaps. Women are never logical when they're excited, and I oughtn't to have flared up as I did; but it's all over now, and regret is of no consequence—no consequence whatever—except—to me."

Heaton restlessly shifted his position and lit a cigarette. He sought once more to interest himself in the people around him, but the result was merely wasted energy—no effort could claim his thoughts to immediate objects; they invariably and irresistibly went back to other scenes and other days, now almost a year old.

Those other scenes were always bright, lovingly idealised by the touch of memory and tinged with vague regret. He had lived every hour over many times as he lay on the veldt at night, with the stars above, and death in the shape of Boer rifles lurking in the darkness around him.

And afterwards, when the shadow had come up close to him and he lay in hospital, bruised and broken, with all the life and energy well-nigh crushed out of him, the same days, and the same scenes, and the same woman mingled with the phantom shadows flitting across an imagination quickened with the heat of delirium.

And now, as he sat in a corner of Hyde Park, with the soft June breeze ruffling the longish hair, picked out with grey near the temples, and the drowsy hum of the city mellowed by distance, lulling the bodily weakness, one particular scene stood out with a vividness mentally painful.

The scene that suggested itself was not a pleasant one for Heaton's contemplation—the surroundings that witness the rupture of a man's happiness are rarely attractive, afterwards; but the man's strength of will, weakened by physical illness, could not repress the picture so persistently forcing itself before him.

It was a large room, but warm and cosy, and its details evinced the hand and refined taste of a lady. A big, brown spaniel lay stretched on a rug in front of the fire, sleeping comfortably.

The woman, whose face had haunted Heaton during those long hours of physical anguish in the hospital, stood erect and haughty, in the centre of the room, her eyes suffused with haughty pride and anger. He himself stood equally erect, the passion within him finding vent in his set teeth, and the convulsive grip on the handle of the door.

That was the picture that impressed itself, with photographic distinctness, on Heaton's brain as he wearily reclined on the uncomfortable Park chair, four months after he had won the Victoria Cross.

The picture was not an original one—many hands had painted it, many times before, and the story had been

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worn threadbare by repetition; but still it will be told and retold as long as the earth with its sin and virtue moves in space, and love and distrust sway the hearts of men and women.

Some fancied slight on the man's part, followed by amazed repudiation on that of the woman. Angry insistence, answered with haughty vituperation, mutual pride—and the story is finished!

Sometimes the broken threads are joined together again and merge in a single end, but now and then, what the claws of pride have rent asunder gets wound on the spool of Fate in ways divergent.

And pride had entered strongly into Heaton's romance—the unbending mutual pride of two finely-tempered natures.

For each, convinced of the other's error, looked longingly, though unyieldingly, for mutual concession, but the concession never came, and shortly after the quarrel Heaton had sailed for South Africa.

Such was the outline of the story Heaton sat reviewing, with half-closed eyes, from the vantage of a Hyde Park chair.

"Glenville said there was talk of an engagement," he muttered, absently, "between her and Mason of the Blues. I cut him out once," smiling bitterly, "but he's having his innings now, and she—well, she has forgotten the episode of twelve months ago, pretty quickly. It's the way women——"

Suddenly Heaton was summarily interrupted in the middle of his cogitations by a joyous bark, and something with big, brown dusty paws jumped against him in a transport of delighted recognition.

"Why, Pomp, old chap," exclaimed Heaton, as he at length succeeded in identifying the pirouetting mixed-up mass of canine limbs and silky brown hair. The dog stayed his contortions for a moment as Heaton spoke, then resting his forepaws on the latter's knees, gazed into his face with big soft eyes and wide-open mouth.

"Thank you, old boy," said Heaton, patting the dog's head, "you have given me the very warmest and most spontaneous welcome home I have had yet. A year's absence hasn't weakened your memory, has it? Think of it, old dog, it's exactly a year since that day when you lay on the hearthrug, snoring beatifically, and I—I——"

Suddenly the dog barked, and then wagged his tail vigorously, as a lady approached.

Heaton glanced up to discover the dog's disquietude and a faint flush showed behind his pale skin, as he recognised the woman with whom he had quarrelled twelve months before.

She had been advancing rapidly, inwardly wondering at the dog's unusual partiality for strangers, but involuntarily stopped as their glances met.

For one moment a strange softness swept round the rather hard corners of her mouth, and her face whitened slightly, but, with an effort, she threw her head back and continued on her way haughtily.

"Pomp!" she cried, "come along, this instant, sir! You must not intrude on—strangers."

Heaton had meanwhile bent his head slightly, and his mouth contracted a little at the word "stranger"; then a strange keen realisation of his physical debility came home to him with the rush of a sudden revelation, and the attenuated fingers that stroked the glossy head of the dog grew slightly cold.

"You must get along, old chap," he said gently, putting the dog down from his knee; "your mistress says you're not to intrude on——strangers."

But Pomp had no intention of obeying the mandate; his deposition from Heaton's knees was suffered in meekness, but the accompanying order carried no weight evidently, as he lay down on the gravel imperturably, and gazed up at Heaton with lazy indifference.

Presently his mistress, who had meanwhile walked on some considerable distance, noticed his continued absence, and wheeled round in deep annoyance.

"Pomp! Pomp!" she called out angrily.

The cause of her wrath lazily glanced round the leg of Heaton's trousers at his chagrined mistress, then aggravatingly wagged his tail twice, and glanced up at Heaton as if to seek commendation of his disobedience; and, miserable as the latter felt, he could not restrain a faint smile at the whimsical gravity of the dog.

"Now, really, old chap," he said, trying to lift the fat, sleek body of the rebellious spaniel from the ground, "you must go. Glad as I am to see you, I don't wish to make your mistress hate me more than she does already, by compounding your disobedience; so run off, old man."

Pomp suffered himself to be lifted, but on regaining his legs, evinced no disposition to move, but glanced alternately from the distant figure of his mistress to the face of the man beside him, as if in amazed wonderment at the unusual amount of space separating the objects of his interest.

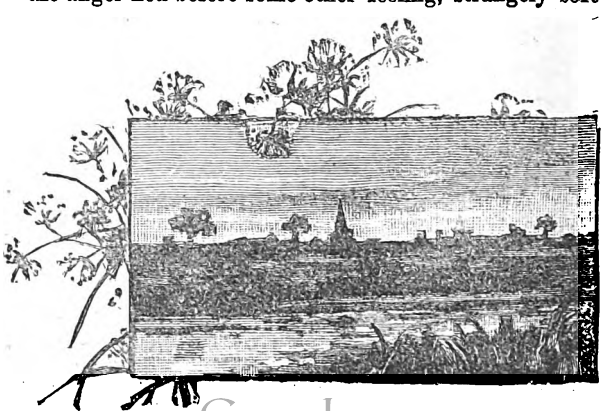
Presently the angry incisive tones of his mistress were repeated. "Pomp! Pomp! come along this instant, sir!"

"Off you go," said Heaton, determinedly, as he gently pushed the spaniel away from him, with the point of his stick. The latter looked at him reproachfully, but refused to budge, and Heaton began to feel himself in rather an uncomfortable if not slightly ridiculous position.

Again the angry voice of the lady came towards him, but the only response evoked was a complacent wag of the tail; otherwise the object of her solicitude remained impassive.

Meanwhile Heaton was alternately flushing and paling with annoyance. Probably she would think he sought to detain the dog out of childish spite for the purpose of placing her in a ridiculously awkward position. The thought was not pleasant, and he twisted in his chair uncomfortably, but the troublesome thought refused to evaporate, and at length Heaton in exasperation rose, and shortly calling to the dog, walked towardsthe lady.

An expression of surprise, followed by a slight flush of anger, flitted across her features for a moment, as she saw him rise from his chair, and come towards her, then the anger fled before some other feeling, strangely soft



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and tender, as she observed the almost pathetic slowness of his movements.

"I beg your pardon," he said, raising his hat, "for appearing to force myself on you, but the dog wouldn't leave me, so I thought it would save you some annoyance if I brought him to you."

"Thank you," she said, "he is very disobedient to-day, he doesn't usually——"

"Intrude on strangers," supplemented Heaton with a bitter smile.

"I am sorry I said that, now," she corrected quietly, "it was despicable of me to have ever made such a remark. You have been very ill, I he—I read all about your heroism in the papers, and I am truly sorry for hurting you gratuitously. Won't you believe me?" she continued almost wistfully, "when I repeat that I am thoroughly ashamed, and very deeply grieved for having hurt you so?"

"Yes," said Heaton gently, "I do believe you."

He did not look up as he made the remark but remained with his eyes fixed on the holes in the gravel, which his stick was engaged in manufacturing.

"You have not quite recovered yet," she continued, after a surreptitious glance at Heaton's rather grey looking face.

"No," he answered, raising his eyes to hers, "on some days I imagine I am nearly well, on others the uncomfortable demon of pessimism tries to persuade me that I shall never be quite right again. But, on the whole, I can safely say I feel better, much better, than I did six months ago."

"Six months ago," she repeated slowly, "if my memory serves me correctly, your life was being despaired of, so your answer is equivalent to a negative; you—why, what is the matter?" she broke off suddenly, as Heaton leaned heavily on his stick, and covered his face with the palm of his hand for a moment.

When he removed it, she thought his eyes looked almost black amidst the ashy whiteness of his face.

"Oh! it's nothing, really," he answered, with a ghostly smile of deprecation, "it's awfully stupid, but I got up from that seat rather suddenly, and the doctors, you see, have been counselling moderation in speed and method in movement and one cannot with impunity, smash their counsels—I am sorry I——"

"Please don't," she interrupted quickly, "take this instead," and she handed him a tiny bottle of smelling salts.

Heaton accepted the restorative gratefully.

"Would you mind my sitting down for a moment on one of these chairs?" he said, "I get tired very easily," he added apologetically.

"Of course not," she said anxiously, "please don't mention foolish scruples in a case like this, it is ridiculous. Are you better now?" she inquired anxiously as they sat down with the redoubtable Pomp occupying the intervening space between the two chairs.

"Yes, I'm all right now, thank you," said Heaton gratefully, as he turned towards her. "You are very good to me," he continued, "after what I——Will you forgive me," he broke off, "if I speak to you about the—about twelve months ago? It cannot matter much now, of course, but I should like you to know that I have been punished for my distrust and obstinate pig-headedness by one deep unavailing regret. As I lay in the hospital, staring up all day long at the whitewashed ceiling, the pride and obstinacy all died out of me, and only the pain for any trouble and annoyance I caused you, remained. I don't quite know why I speak to you as I am doing," he went on apologetically, "only when one is very weak one is apt to become garrulous, and if by any chance I should never get quite right again, I want you to know that no one could wish you more happiness than I do, in your new life——"

"My new life," she repeated amazedly, "what do you mean?"

"Your engagement to——"

"Engagement! I don't quite understand!"

"Aren't you going to marry Mason? I heard——"

"No," she said quietly but decisively, "at present I have no intention of marrying Mr. Mason. I shall never——"

Her voice wavered slightly, as she broke off in the middle of the sentence and stooping over the dog commenced to stroke his big brown head.

Heaton's eyes were rivetted on her hat and a tumultuous sense of gladness surged through him. With a flush on his face he stooped and laid his hand on the dog's head also. The latter accepted the attention complacently.

Presently the girl looked up as Heaton's fingers closed round hers, and the eyes which met his glance were suffused with tears.

"Vera," he said gently, "shall we go back to where we left off, twelve months ago?"

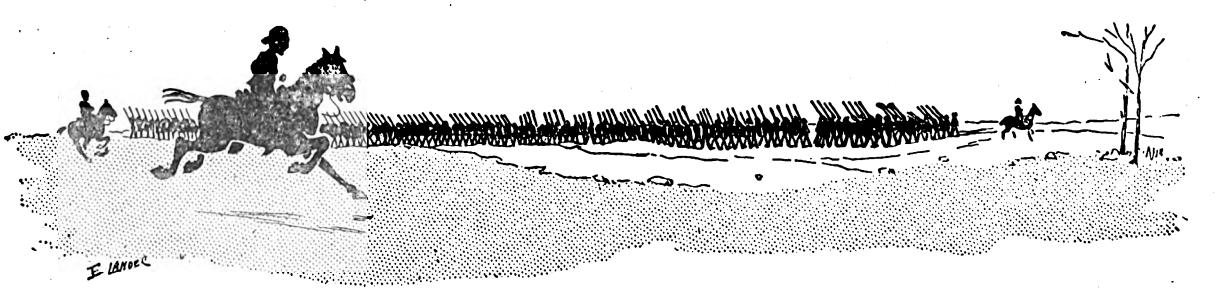
"Yes," she whispered, "we will go back!"

After a few moments of such silence as only comes from utter content, the girl with an impulsive movement stooped down and kissed the dog's head.

"You darling!" she cried. "We owe all our happiness to you!"

"Yes," said Heaton with a long breath, "neither of us will ever forget 'The Intervention of Pomp.'"

NOLAN OF CASTLEKNOCK.



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The Poet's Awakening.

YES, I will see him.

The editor rose from his desk, glancing at the card in his hand with a pleasant smile of anticipation. A moment later he made a step forward with outstretched hand as his visitor entered.

"Are you Mr. Sparling?" he asked, a shade, half surprise, half doubt, making itself apparent in voice and look.

"Yes, but, out it's Mr. Vernon, the editor, I want to see."

"I am Mr. Vernon, and very pleased to make your acquaintance, Mr. Sparling. I count you as the most interesting of all my contributors. Pray sit down; though a busy man I can spare a quarter of an hour for so famous a personage as you are becoming."

Mr. Sparling sat down as commanded but remained silent. He felt very shy and to add to his confusion this man to whom he had decided to make a confidential communication was not elderly as he had imagined, but in appearance little older than himself. Could this be the editor of the *Leicester Magazine*, the success of the day, one of the best edited and cleverest of all the periodicals under which Smith's bookstalls groaned? However, his manner was friendly and kind.

"I feel very proud," the editor was saying, "at having discovered you. When your biography is published many years hence the fact that your first verses appeared in my magazine will be recorded."

"Indeed," stammered the poet, "I am very grateful to you. I could hardly believe my eyes when you acknowledged my first poem, and when I saw it in print."

"Good work," said the editor a trifle dogmatically, "finds its market sooner or later. The present age is critical but broad-minded. Of course the stock saying that literature is an overcrowded profession is true; on the other hand a man of talents finds his opening earlier now than in any other time. There are men who wail that they are neglected geniuses, I read their manuscripts every day—and I sincerely hope that they will remain neglected. Ever since I started the *Leicester* I have been looking for a new poet; not a mere manufacturer of verses, but a poet. Your first contribution pleased me immensely, it had the true touch of genius. It has been very gratifying, too, to find my own opinion endorsed by other editors. Never have poems been so extensively annexed. Why every evening paper copies them!"

Underlying the editor's compliments was a vague unexpressed doubt whether the young man sitting awkwardly on the edge of a chair, a nervous smile on his commonplace face, could in reality be the author of the exquisite verses which, under the initials H. S., had created so much stir in the literary world. They struck a note poets are prone to harp on, the awakening of love. But though the theme was hackneyed, the expression was fresh; this fine gift of song moved the most careless and cynical, so infinitely tender yet deep-seeing was the bard. Certainly H. S. was no slavish imitator of the great poets of the past. No wonder the editor was proud of having published such verses. But could this man have written them?

He was a shy looking man of about four and twenty, with dark hair and small pale features. The face was freckled, the nose ill shaped, the whole expression and appearance homely. Nor did his dress improve him. A painfully new tweed suit clung awkwardly about his figure, his tie was tawdry, his boots clumsy, he evidently came fresh from the barbers, a smell of pomade enveloping him. He looked like a provincial clerk unaccustomed to society.

And this, the editor learnt with astonishment, was the case. Only a post office clerk in Yarmouth, whose aunt and guardian let lodgings!

"And when did you begin writing poetry?"

The visitor flushed painfully. "I was coming to that," he said, and paused a moment, then gaining courage from the other's manner, pursued somewhat shamefacedly:

"I've never told anyone the story and I'm afraid you'll only laugh, but I want to ask your advice. The

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fact is I want to find a certain lady living in London, and I don't know how to begin."

"There are, I should say, over two million ladies in London," said the editor. "But let me hear, perhaps I can aid you."

"I'm a shy man," confessed the poet, "and I've practically no friends. I don't play cricket or football, and my only amusement is reading. I was especially fond of reading poetry, Tennyson, Longfellow, Shelley, Swinburne—I've read nearly all the poets but till last August I never tried to write a line.

"It was one evening last August, that I was inspired to write, the evening when I first met her; from that day I began a new life. I had gone for a bicycle ride, but it was so dusty and crowded on the road that at Caistor I turned off and wheeled my machine along a footpath through a field leading to the sea. I lay down. facing it on one of the sand-hills that fringe the shore. The waves were breaking very softly on the sandy beach, I could hear the twitter of birds among the belt of trees in the fields behind, and I lay enjoying it all, feeling tired and half drowsy, when a soft voice addressed me. I looked and for the moment thought I was dreaming, never had I seen so beautiful a creature as the woman who stood beside me gazing down with dark blue inquiring eyes. I stared, silent, tongue-tied.

"'Won't you answer me?' she said smiling, and then I began to stammer an apology and explain I had not heard what she said.

"'I want to get on the Yarmouth Road. I have lost my friends and the way!' she replied smiling divinely.

"'It is close by,' I answered, 'if you will allow me I will show you.'

"We walked along the footpath together, I wheeling her machine, and when we reached the gate, the road was plainly visible. She stopped me there, said she would trouble me no further, and with a bow of farewell mounted and rode swiftly off. In another two minutes she had rounded the corner and passed out of sight. I saw her vanish from my eyes five minutes after she had first appeared, but her memory has been with me ever since. Yet as I rode home later, I could remember hardly anything of what she had said as we walked, except that she was a Londoner, while I had been too shy and stupid to say anything.

"My brain was in a whirl; as I thought of her, half-unconsciously words, verses, came into my head. Late that night I sat down and wrote the poem I first sent you. Next morning when I read it I thought it good and could hardly believe I had written it, so I sent it to the *Leicester*.

"And that is how all my poems have been written; thinking of her, dreaming of her, worshipping her memory, the verses came, poems fit to express my love and adoration."

"Surely," thought Vernon, "the man is speaking the truth, he does not appear to have enough imagination to invent the story."

"Hitherto I have been content with only the memory, but that no longer satisfies," continued the love-lorn young man. "An infinite craving to see her again if only for a moment overwhelms me, and so now I've got my fortnight's holiday,"—"oh, bathos," murmured the editor—"I've come to London to seek her."

"To seek her? But have you no clue to her identity, nothing to guide your search?"

"Absolutely none."

"Then your search is hopeless; if you are ignorant of name, address——"

"Who is considered the most beautiful woman in London?" interrupted the poet.

"Good Heavens, how can I answer that question? Their name is legion. Stay, I can give you one practical piece of advice—look at the photographs in the shop windows."

"I will walk London," said the poet doggedly, "till I find her!"

The editor rose to intimate that the interview was at an end.

"Come and see me again when I not so busy. Have you nothing fresh for me?"

"Yes, I have just finished a new poem."

"I should like to see it, bring it yourself, come to-morrow, no, Thursday is a quiet day, come on Thursday, and we'll have another chat. Perhaps the mysterious goddess will be found."

"Ah, if I could only find her."

"Would you be happier?" said the editor. "Perhaps—perhaps the goddess has feet of clay."

"What did he mean?" mused the poet as he paced the Strand, and being at that moment only Herbert Sparling, a common-place and rather stupid young man, he did not understand. Neither did he fully realise the wonderful gift he possessed. For we all of us when young and growing into manhood at times have great thoughts. Transcendental ideas float nebulous in our brains; we seem lifted above ourselves. And sometimes when this mood is upon us, we fly to paper seeking relief by the flow of words with which we endeavour to clothe our great thought, the original piece of philosophy, the verse with its noble ring; alas, when morning comes, how often we find dross instead of gold. Where is the gold minted from our brain, the glass of sparkling champagne creaming and bubbling? Gone: the coin rings flat, it is only brass, and a bad imitation, too; the champagne is ginger beer, flat as ditch-water. But occasionally it is otherwise, and Herbert Sparling was one of the exceptions.

The poet's love was a thing apart, a secret jealously hid, and now that he was in London the fascination the great city has for provincials half swamped his dream of the fair unknown goddess for whom he was searching. As he walked he looked for her, but the interesting and novel sights that met his eyes could not be entirely banished.

He obeyed the editor's hint to look at the photographs in shop windows. There he saw pretty faces, mostly of theatrical stars. One of these young ladies was not unlike the beautiful unknown; she was dressed in a short frock, and coquettishly surveyed the world under a big straw hat, with a somewhat forced smile. There seemed profanation in the resemblance, and the poet turned away.

About six he entered a shop for tea, late dinners being unfamiliar to him; he ate and drank feeling tired and depressed. He was in the same city with his goddess, but she seemed further away than when he wandered on the beach at Yarmouth. Surely his search would be useless, yet an inward voice stronger than he bade him continue; to lose heart the first day was absurd.

As he was about to rise, a newcomer who had just taken the vacant chair opposite to him exclaimed: "Why, it's Mr. Sparling," and the poet recognised a man who had lodged the previous summer at his aunt's house, a clerk of the name of Catley.

"How's the old lady?" said Catley genially. "I haven't forgotten her, or her light dumplings and gravy.

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I daresay I shall come to Yarmouth again, when I get my holidays. What are you doing here? Having your holidays, are you? On the loose, eh? Oh! I know you provincial chaps who go to church or chapel regular on Sundays and look as if butter wouldn't melt in your mouths. I know what you're up to in London when you're sight-seeing."

He emphasised his remarks with a wink and dig at Herbert's ribs.

"Look here, are you going anywhere this evening? I've got two seats for the Palatial, fauteuils, too. Dicky Embleton, the great serio-comic, gave them to me; he lives my way, and, I may say, we're pals."

Herbert was obliged to confess that he had no engagement, and, as Mr. Catley was incapable of realising anyone preferring solitude to his society, the matter was settled. Mr. Catley proceeded to eat his tea, entertaining his provincial friend with an account of a ripping fine girl whose acquaintance he had lately made, and various anecdotes concerning the great Dicky Embleton.

"I've seen him get outside ten whiskies and soda without getting squiffy. There's an 'ead for you!

"I say," proceeded Mr. Catley, "how's the pretty girl who's so mashed on you down at Yarmouth?"

"Who do you mean?" asked Herbert, trying to assert some dignity.

"Why, you know who I mean, Miss Clara Ellis. Was always coming to see your aunt. That girl's a catch, too; I should say her father's a warm man. That shop of his must be worth a pretty penny. Have you popped the question?"

"I am not engaged to Miss Ellis," said Herbert stiffly, "if that is what you mean. We are very good friends, have been all our lives, nothing more."

"Well, you are a fool," said Mr. Catley frankly. "Why, I'd marry her like a shot myself. I did try a bit of a mash but it was no good. She was so gone on you. And she an only child, the old man has got nobody else to leave it to. You don't know your luck; come along, let's be off."

The poet meekly allowed himself to be alternately chaffed and patronised and presently found himself in the red plush seats of the Palatial, while Catley told him in a loud whisper the private history of each of the artistes.

A long and dreary ballet came later and the house began to fill.

"Dolly Dorrington's next," said Catley, "she'll sing, 'Ducky, ducky.' She'd make a cat laugh, she does go near the knuckle. I reckon there'll be a row about her songs when the licences are applied for. They say the diamonds she wears are worth four thou. Lord Sherrington gave them to her, he's spent eight thou. over her this year."

A burst of music from the orchestra announced the inimitable Dolly, "exclusively engaged." Herbert raised his eyes from the programme and looked at her. His face went white, and a blank sense of horror filled him. Then as he stared, a sigh of relief broke from his lips; for the moment so close was the resemblance that he had taken the singer for the unknown goddess, but he now recognised one distinctive feature which showed him he was mistaken.

"Isn't she ripping?" whispered Catley, "and she's as fetching off the stage as on. I remember seeing her down at Yarmouth last August on the pier."

"I think you are mistaken," said Herbert; "there was a lady, I know, at Yarmouth last August very much like her, for I saw her once, but she had lovely yellow hair and this Miss Dorrington has red."

"Bless you, it was the same, I know I'm not mistaken. Dolly moves with the fashions; yellow hair was all the go last year. Now listen."

Herbert sat silent and stunned, his brain too numb to realise the full extent of his discovery. But as the song went on it came to him with pitiless force like drops of water falling from a height, each drop increasing the torture. He winced in agony as the broad inuendoes and equivocal jokes of the singer came on his ears. He felt as though he could not sit and endure it any longer, it must be a mistake; an extraordinary resemblance must have deceived Catley as well as himself, he must see her nearer so as to be certain. Unobserved by his companion, he slipped out quietly and sought the stage door.

He had not long to wait; presently the door opened and Miss Dorrington emerged, escorted by a young man in evening dress who led her to a flashey looking brougham which stood by. A liveried lad opened the door. "Home, my lord?" he queried. The young man nodded and handed the lady in. Herbert was so close he could have touched her, his eyes were riveted on her face, there was no longer any mistake, his goddess was found but she was of earth, earthy. The carriage rolled away and left him standing forlorn and miserable.

Herbert walked straight back to his lodgings; the electric light dazzled his eyes, and the busy crowded streets jarred and irritated his nerves; he wanted to be alone, to think. He sat motionless for hours on his bed that night staring before him with glassy eyes. Dawn was breaking before he roused himself and going to his portmanteau took out some sheets of paper. Folding them in squills he held them to the gas jet till there was nothing left but a little heap of ashes.

Next Thursday as the editor went home he remembered the poet had not called. He did not know his contributor's London address, but when a fortnight had gone by without his seeing or hearing from him he wrote to Yarmouth. To this letter he received no reply, nor to another he wrote subsequently. Presently in the bustle of a busy life the poet faded from his memory. Poetry is not essential, a magazine can get on very well without it, yet occasionally he wondered why the poems had ceased so suddenly.

It was three months later that Mrs. Taylor, the evening before her nephew's wedding day, said in a tone of conscious pride:

"Well, 'Erbert, all I can say is you're a very lucky man. The Sparlings 'as always kept themselves respectable, but you're the first as has ever taken a thirty-two pound semi-detached villa, rates and taxes extra, electric light laid on, with a bath-room with 'ot and cold water, and a greenhouse as well. And to marry a girl like Clara, who's quite the lady, who's 'ad lessons in singing from the sister of a barronite, and can talk French! I must say Mr. Ellis has brought her up proper, never let her look in the shop, much less serve there. And the fine furniture he's bought and furnished your house from top to bottom with. Well, you ought to be 'appy, though I can't say as you're so cheerful as you used to be when you were always scribbling, but you seem to have dropped that lately."

"Yes," answered Herbert, "I've dropped that."

He never wrote another line.

GUY CADOGAN ROTHERY.
CHARLES D. LESLIE.

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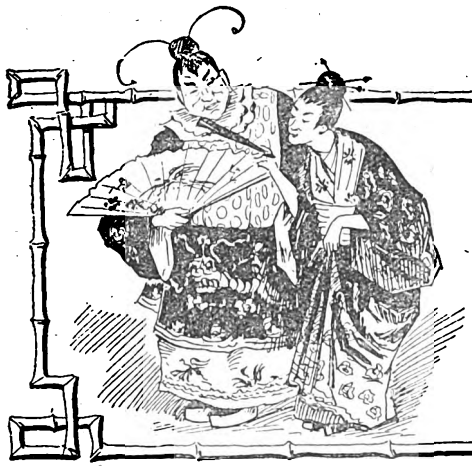

LOVE IN NIPPON.

It was a curious gathering. Looking over the deep, serene Sumida with its palace-boats, whence arose the quaint strains of *samisen*, now heaving and now mellowing on the waves of its eventide; looking across to the dreamy banks of Mukojima, with their ten miles of the cherry groves, now ablaze in the setting sun of an early spring, the uncertain shapes of home-bound epicureans moving slowly; here, on Hashiba side, in a lordly hall of Hosokawa mansion, there were assembled in a strange concourse some ten or twelve Englishmen and Americans and a few other Europeans, with a goodly number of the Japanese themselves sprinkled among them. It is not for me to tell how this meeting came about; I only happen to know that its object was to listen to the tale of love of many a different land.

The last speaker sat down. The storm of applause raged and subsided. The chairman called on the next, and great was the enthusiasm that followed. In its midst arose Mr. Okada Gemba, a stalwart man of fifty years, full of military airs. One would have expected anything but a gentle voice of sweet passion from a man of his type; yet you could easily trace out a forehead of beautiful shape and a mouth of ideal cut, which told of a handsome face of the early days, now buried under the grey. Let us listen:

"I rise with a nameless feeling. After having listened to the excellent stories of the preceding gentlemen, also well told, what could you expect from me? Yet I am here to-night to represent our beloved Japan. Japan shall not be outdone. No, not even in the matter of love. I will proceed:

"Thirty-five years ago I was a young man of twenty, a winsome youth. But how many of you here know the Japan of those days of three decades and five springs ago? The two centuries of peace and plenty perfected the splendour of Tokugawa dynasty, alas! at the expense of the honest and the hard-working. Outside the very walls of polish and luxury the atmosphere was thick with buzzing noises, as of bees, ready for a new life; new action and restlessness and venturesomeness became the spirit of the day among the quick. Nor was I an exception. At twenty I left the home, and went about *a-mushashigio* (wandering about for the championship of the martial arts). Ah! the word itself has become a relic of the past feudalism now: but in those days there was a glory of manhood in its very sound.

"I journeyed south. In Nagasaki I became acquainted with an Englishman, a survivor of a wreck. From him I acquired a little English and some knowledge of the West. It was like a peep into the grandeur of a forbidden land; and a forbidden land it was for us at the time, that home of a modern civilization. My spirit took a new turn then, and went a little ahead of the reckoning of the period. My friends, however, warned me in time that I was being suspected of high-sounding crimes, such as desertion, treason, etc., so I hurried to North and went wandering through the domains of the different *daimias* of those regions, whiling away the days of an unwilling exile.

* * * * *

"Five years elapsed; and one day I walked past the little town of Yaita and came under a bower of a cherry-tree, which outspread its branches over the road, growing itself within the row of a long winding hedge-fence encircling a large villa. The time was spring. The queen blossoms were in their glory. I looked up and saw the sister trees rivalling their magnificence over the whole length of the villa, but the one I stood under was the queen of queens. In a momentary dream of happiness I mused out:

"U-tsu-ku-shi-na
I-ma-o sa-ka-ri-ni
Sa-ku-ra-ba-na
No-chio-no Shi-ru-shi-ni
Ta-wo-ri-te-va u-kan."

"(How grand in thy glory: O blossoming cherry: That the like be mine, will I thy branch pluck now.) I reached up my hand, and was about to break the nearest one, when I heard a noise of someone else tearing down a branch within.

"A sweet voice then said: 'Your pardon,' and a hand, beauteous as pearl, held out to me a pink-clustered bough through a crevice in the hedge growth. And lo! in the little opening I beheld a face as of a flower. I heard my own blood coursing in my veins. I stretched out my hand, received the gift, and said an awkward thanks, half-apologetically. I saw a faint streak of crimson mount the face, but only for a moment; it disappeared behind where the growth was the thickest, an uncertain figure gliding away out of my sight. For the first time in my life I, leaning eagerly forward against the hedge, found myself

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trying to catch a glimpse of a woman. I was spell-bound, I forgot myself.

"I leaned there all absorbed, till a hand suddenly jerked me by the shoulder, and a gruff voice said:

"'A gentleman or a thief?'

"Turning round quickly, and taking up a position of defence, I said in my consternation:

"'Thy words of impertinence! I am a gentleman; what of that?' and I faced a group of five *samurai* smiling a smile of derision.

"The words had scarcely left my lips when one of them ejaculated:

"'Noble gentleman! we are glad to make your acquaintance,' and his well-spread palm came flashing over my cheek. But it lodged itself only in my firm grasp, which pulled my innocent saluter a little toward myself, and with a twist of my body I gave him a twist and threw him in the air—a respectable toss! Ah! you smile, my good audience; you do not believe me? Yet only thirty years ago a feat like this was a mere commonplace. Ah me! how old have I grown these days.

"The tossed man picked himself deftly up, and with his comrades withdrew. I did not, but stood glaring defiance at them with my hand on the hilt of my sword. Passers-by and curious on lookers from the vicinity gathered round us in a goodly crowd. A breathless silence sealed their mouths, and they kept a safe distance watching our next move. The odds were against me, most plainly, but my calm, collected manner seemed to have awakened an awe in my assailants, so that each was anxious to have the other start the first blow.

"Irritated at their cowardice, I relaxed my guard. Down came a sword descending over me—only to hit the air.

"For mine left its scabbard at the same moment, and striking him on the back felled my enemy to the ground. At this the other four jumped upon me. I was now in great danger, when there came rushing towards us two men from opposite directions. One of them exclaimed:

"'Cowards! away with your arms!'

"My foes dodged sulkily a few steps backward, which I let them do without pressing on them, as the fight was after all an unwilling one on my part. Then the other of the new-comers called out to me:

"'Honoured stranger, pray calm your anger, even for the sake of the flowers you stand under.'

"A sweet fancy! My heart softened, and I, too, put away my weapon, at which the first man stepped forward and with an unexpected politeness addressed me:

"'Ha! all health to you, Mr. Okada. If I am not mistaken, you are the son of my honoured master!'

"I recognised in the man Nejiro Yokone, who at the time I left my father, was one of his principal pupils in the time-honoured art of fencing. It foreboded ill that he should salute me thus with open hands.

"Some time before this I heard a rumour that the same Nejiro was expelled from my father's for a certain offence not to be mentioned here, and there was no reason whatever that he should bear me good-will. But there he was, with bows, smiles, and exclamations, the very

I was now in great danger, when there came rushing towards us two men.

picture of friendliness. I accepted them all with good grace. He even apologised to me on behalf of the bullies who so unwarrantably attacked me; he said he was keeping a fencing-school of his own in Yaita, and that they were his green pupils. He also introduced me to the man who bade me peace.

"The gentleman's name was Mr. Hori, and he it was who owned the cherry-bowered villa. Mr. Hori proposed that we should all adjourn to a feast, explaining to me at the same time that that day he had invited Nejiro and his pupils with some of the townspeople to a party in honour of his villa's spring, and that I should be welcome above others as an old friend of Professor Yokone's. Professor Yokone, too, added a word of persuasion; so I followed suit, and walked into Mr. Hori's.

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"From the *genka* (entrance) through the hallway to the guests' room, glitter and lustre there were none to force upon the vulgar the idolatry of wealth; but in the midst of the subdued quietness of colours and ornaments there issued a gentle fragrance of unstained woodwork, and it was delightful to tread on the pale green matting of fresh *tatami*. The silken *kakemono*, or paintings, that hung gracefully in a fantastic niche of *tokonoma*, the dwarf pines and cut twigs which so picturesquely stood in pots and vases of exquisite makes, the spacious garden that opened in front like a painted scenery with its pond, rocks, and bowering trees; all bespoke superior taste and culture in the host.

"Upon these, however, I shall not dwell, but the beautiful panorama hangs before me now! I see the little sunken-eyed Yokone, bulging himself out superbly at the head of a motley row of the rustic guests. I see the *karakami* door behind the host slide gently open. I see a lady, the graceful wife of our host, enter the room, followed timidly by her daughter. My heart quickens—it throbs! Lo! she is the same—that fair daughter of mine host—she is the one who played coquette to me behind the fence!

"Ah! I imagine the undying fragrance of that love-inspiring branch, still lingering about me! How like the flower of flowers she sits there, haunting vision! There were there plump lasses of bonnie faces, but how each eye turned on Miyo, for such was her name. There are warring within me the passions of jealousy and even anger, the twin servants of awakened love, as Nejiro Yokone greeted her with words of familiarity—though they were merest comments on the weather! Yet, ah! I felt dizzy when Miyo bowed me a mumbling bow of acquaintance at the parental words of introduction.

"We all sat there now ready for the feast, but it did not come yet. Mr. Hori had a batch of *tanzaku* cards distributed among us, and demanded of us an *ikku*, a verse, or line of poetical sentiment on his cherries, now in their resplendent bloom. A delightful conceit! But what a cast of smiling despair over the honest country faces! Our host led in scribbling down the thirty one syllables, followed by his wife. Miyo was the next to take up the pen-brush, and then Taro, her youngest brother. Taro was the exact counterpart of his sister in looks, a handsome youth of sixteen! After him I came up in the race, and the worthy professor closed the suit. The rest, one and all, laughed a faint laughter of innocent shame, bowed and scratched their heads, and prayed us to read forth our productions.

"The all-important man, as he sat there, my friend Nejiro Yokone, was asked to read his first. He did, and no one ever heard a worse hackwork of plagiarism; I pitied the poor fellow; but when it was my turn, ha! I had to muster all my courage. Strange power—Love! Only an hour ago I defied death in the midst of flashing swords. But now a glance, a smile, a word, and I sat on a rack of judgment—almost trembling! But in those days, thirty years ago, *Samurai* was ashamed to know himself to be in love. I steadied myself, nevertheless, and calmly sang out:

"'Ka-ba-ka-ri-ni
A-wa-re-to Koso-wa
O-mo-ho-u-re
Ha-na-no Ko-ko-ro-zo
I-ka-ni A-ru-ru-um?

("While thus and so I love thee, O beauteous flower, I wonder where thy thoughts be?)

"The flower told me they were on me, about me, but that was years afterwards. The *chokus* of warmed *sake* now went their rounds. *Tai*-soup; boiled *hirame*; sliced *katsu-o-ya*; mother-of-pearl in vinegar; pigeons and snipes cut in bits, and roasted whole; but away with the inventory. The time flew fast and the sun was now low. The blossoming cherries glowed and reddened in its departing rays.

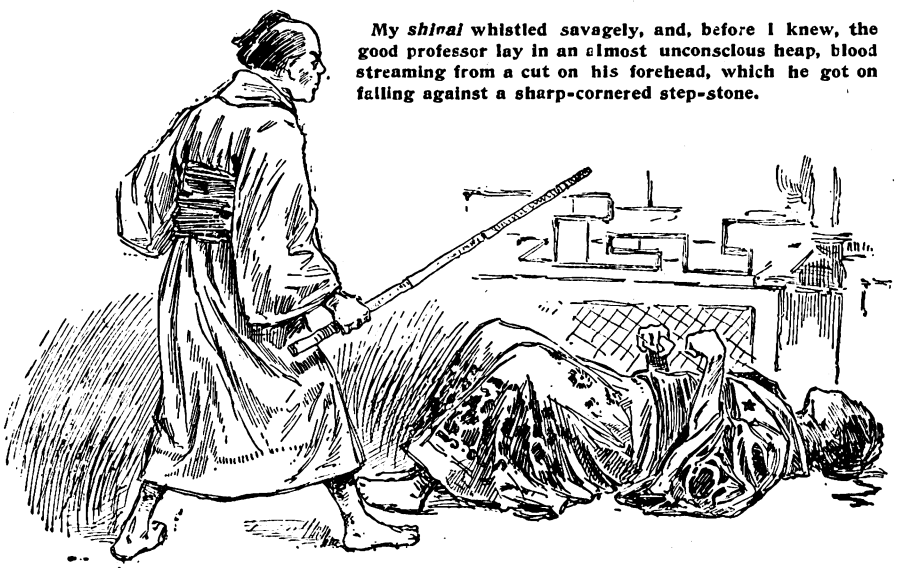
"We were in the height of our rustic revelry when Yokone took us by surprise by coolly saying:

"'I admit that poesy is a form of pleasure, but it is for those of older age and gentler sex; we have gratified them both. But we *samurai* glory in the martial arts; let us now have our turn.'

"And he challenged me to a fencing bout. I refused—refused till common sense and modesty were alike exhausted.

"We alighted on the ground, Nejiro and I—and fought with the *shinai* (bamboo swords). I easily won the first, but gave him the second round, for he was drunk. Upon his victory, however, Yokone became decidedly unpleasant, and abused not only myself, but my honoured father as well. There were there the five of his pupils, one of whom had the contour of his flat head frightfully altered by me. There were also fair Miyo and other girls and women of the vicinity, listening to him.

"Poor Nejiro must have thought it a right good opportunity to revenge himself on the son of his master, who had rightly disgraced him. Nejiro challenged me for the third time. I was not yet intoxicated, and refused it. Nejiro's pupils chuckled and said loudly among them-



My *shinai* whistled savagely, and, before I knew, the good professor lay in an almost unconscious heap, blood streaming from a cut on his forehead, which he got on falling against a sharp-cornered step-stone.

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selves that I was wise. Nejiro repeated the challenge; I accepted. My *shinai* whistled savagely, and, before I knew, the good professor lay in an almost unconscious heap, blood streaming from a cut on his forehead, which he got on falling against a sharp-cornered step-stone.

"You may well imagine the confusion that ensued. The banquet broke up suddenly, and Nejiro was hurriedly carried away on a litter. In sincere regret I offered to accompany the wounded professor to his house, but the poor fellow stopped me hysterically, saying: 'Avant! thou coward! Knowing me drunk, thou hast violated the courtesy of the true *samurai*-hood! Thou dog! none of thy hypocrisy!' I kept my peace. The situation was extremely awkward. As soon as Nejiro was carried out, I said my adieu to the host, not forgetting to add a word of gratitude as well as of deep regret. Mr. Hori would not listen to me; on the contrary, he invited me to stay with him, for the night at least, and even much longer if it did not inconvenience me much. I almost suspected the man. Somehow, however, I was loth to leave the house, so that I was easily prevailed upon.

"What next happened was that the following morning found the professor Nejiro Yokone groaningly ill, which caused a vacancy in no less a position than that of Mr. Hori's family tutorship, and I became temporarily installed in this grave office. The wheel of events was on its freak, I thought. Nevertheless, it gave me an immeasurable satisfaction, in the frame of mind I then was in. For happy were the days that followed — the flowers smiling gladsomely on the growing spring. My pupils—my Miyo and Taro—came regularly at nine in the morning, and we had our physical lesson. Taro, my great favourite, was quite an adept in *kenjutsu* (the long sword fencing), while his sister was wonderfully clever at *kaiken* (stiletto).

As I turned round she handed me a sealed note. I remember her face was death-like, and her hands shook.

"As a teacher I was to be sentimentless. But, the mischief! How pretty and contented Miyo used to look, as I stood by and took her by her hand, showing her the way. I used to wonder then if she knew that I was trembling. In the afternoons we read together the leaves of the old sages. With a long, honest face I used to expostulate on their love-forbidding tenets, while secretly my smouldering heart was in wild rebellion.

"It was probably for ten days that I stayed with Mr. Hori; but now I often look back to the time as if it were months. Ah, the visions of the past! how enlarged they appear, as time stretches out their shadows! Shadows? Nay! I see now the very path which led the way from my room's verandah to the centre of the orchard, and thence sloped upwards to the top of a little height! I used to tread on its winding course, evening after evening, and always unexpectedly meet my fair pupil tripping gently under the flowering trees. She was always with a chaperon who was her nurse. The latter would each time take it upon herself to explain to me that her young mistress had lately grown very sombre, in spite of the gaiety of the season, so that she thought an evening's stroll would do her some good. 'Come!' the woman would say, 'let us climb the hill and Mr. Okada will tell us of his travels and adventures.'

"On the top of the hill we used to sit under a large cherry-tree, and I would start squeezing about the corners of my memory bag, and, lo! the good woman would find some excuse or another to slip away for a time, and then reappear at the right moment—good soul that she was. Left alone, Miyo and I would talk on till the golden sunset gradually changed into the purple mist of distant mountains; and then, in the uncertainty of darkening twilight, our heart-strings, revealed on the flash of our glances, met and tied themselves into knots. Withal, Miyo and I were a pupil and a master distanced from each other by the rigour of an inherited spirit; our expressed love was therefore all the more intense.

"At night the good chaperon would come round to my room to lay out my bed-rig, and smilingly would whisper to me secrets—as she treasured them. The secrets, to be brief, were that when Yokone first opened his school in Yaita his fame as an accomplished master from the capital, and also as a man of courtly manners, spread far and wide, which opened his way into the Hori family. This Nejiro of rabid passions immediately burned his heart at the altar of the beautiful Miyo. But

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Miyo would not have him. Neither would her parents, who soon found out the metal he was made of. But the professor insisted, and well he could do so, for a fencing master on the wing of popularity would have dared anything in those days. Things were indeed come to a very strange state when I made an appearance on the scene, and incidentally proved more or less a godsend to them. This much said, the woman would musingly add: 'You and mistress Miyo would make a beautiful couple.'

"'But, my good woman, she does not care for a homeless wanderer like me,' I would laughingly remark. To this she would excitedly reply:

"'My good sir, you do not know, indeed, you do not know! Heaven has prepared it for you, sir!'

"'How?'

"'Why, sir, the night before that unfortunate *sakura* festival my mistress dreamt—she confides everything to her old nurse, even her dreams, poor thing! She dreamed that she was praying to her patron deity to free her from the inordinate desires of her tutor, whom she did not and could not love. The god benignly opened his lips, and softly said:

"'"To-morrow there shall come a man from the south, journeying past thy home. He is a worthy man, though fleeing from persecution now. Thy brother shall follow him and he will love him. Even him shalt thou be, and be blessed!"'

"In days when love reasoned into mysteries—and who has not had those days?—I was deeply impressed with this bit of occult information. It was on a rainy night that the good woman told me this. I sat up late and long, after she was gone, losing myself in the land of fancies and visions! But it was a dream after all, for on the morrow I rose uncommonly early, after a disturbed sleep, and as I was looking out of my room, with sad, uneasy heart, over the shorn orchard, whose majestic robes of only the day before now lay bespattered over the muddy ground, the old nurse startled me from behind.

"As I turned round she handed me a sealed note, and was gone in a minute. I remember her face was death-like, and her hands shook. The note read: 'With an extreme regret, both my father and myself learn that you are an advocate of the foreign-intercourse policy, and also that the Professor Yokone intends denouncing you to the authorities as soon as he is well enough to come out, which may be to-morrow. I dare not believe all, but it will be for your good if you will leave here immediately on receipt of this note.' It was signed Miyo!

"I read it, and my heart throbbed wildly. I read it over and over again and tore it into shreds. As I recall the occasion, I see before me now my own face, hot-white, quivering, and twitching, and the bloodshot eyes standing on their ends! I stood there on the edge of the room rigid, but trembling—the joys of yesterday suddenly quenched, and the cherished dreams of the future cruelly crushed in the wild awaking of the present. The storm of angry despair, of thirsting revenge, of blind fury, came surging up, but went.

"For in a few moments I had said quietly to myself: 'Poor innocent girl! If she finds a devil in me, I should not blame her. Wiser than she would any moment send me up the cross if only they knew my sympathies and opinions. But the time has not yet come for me; I shall yet awhile bow to fate in ignominy.'

"But I was certain that the time was coming. I calmly made up my little portmanteau and walked out of Mr. Hori's house, without bidding a word of farewell to anybody, which I could not according to the tenour of that evictionary document. They must, I thought, have been glad to get rid of me. And I wended my way, lost in the clamour of jarring thoughts within me—hardly conscious of where I was going.

"Vigilance was severe in Yedo at that time, with its ins and outs of strangers, who daily lost their individuality in the mighty waves of its swarming population; there was more safety there than anywhere else for a person of my circumstances, though the risks were no less. It was this thought, I suppose, which led me eastward out of that little town of Yaita that gloomy morning, and found me the next eve buying a passage on the boat bound from Sekiya to Yedo. The boat took us safely down the river through the night, and about noon the next day we found ourselves at the foot of O-hashi, Yedo. The passengers were soon lost in different directions among the moving crowds of the great city.

"I was tired and wanted a rest. I started toward Bakurocho, the street of hotels. I had gone hardly ten yards when a familiar voice called to me, 'Sensei' (master), and there stood Taro on my left! I could scarcely believe my own senses. Subduing my excitement, I asked him what brought him out here, how he was, where he was bound, etc. He simply said:

"'I am going to follow you wherever you go.'

"I said that was very unreasonable. His only reply was:

"'Please master, take me to a quieter place; you are drawing a crowd round us.'

"He was right; the Yedo people, always keen-eyed for anything unusual, could not fail to see something curious in the contrast between my handsome pupil, in his north-country attire, and me, a wandering *samurai* with a smack of Southern air about me. This was very undesirable. I beckoned to Taro, and in silence we hurried to Bakurocho.

"Once landed in a secluded room in an hotel, he produced to me a letter. It was from Miyo again. There was a strangely forced calmness on Taro's face as he watched me run over the lines which made me see poor Miyo prostrating herself in deep grief, asking me my forgiveness for her last note, and pleading that it was a mortal sacrifice on her part to send me away, but that she thought it was for my sake. I suppressed my tears, in the presence of her brother as I was. I read on, and soon came to where it said: 'Taro wishes to see the world. He is determined. He has confided to me his whole heart, and his sister has taken all the responsibilities to his parents upon herself. He is young, but Taro is a noble youth.' She asked me to take Taro as a servant for her sake, for the sake of her pure love, which would ever be true to me!

"I read through the letter, and I was at my wit's end. I saw plainly that to try to induce Taro to go back to his parents was of no use—for a time, anyway. Yet I had my ambition, my aspiration to accomplish. My spirit of patriotism was stronger than my sentiment of love; and I could ill afford then to be hampered with the care of a country lad. It was a hard dilemma to solve. One thing was clear, and it was that if Taro was to accompany me at all he must be of one mind with me, or he would be an obstacle to every step I might take. For my course lay in what appeared diabolical to the eyes of the multitude of the day.

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"I tried the truth of his heart in a hundred ways, but to my satisfaction his was like a diamond which glowed forth of its native brilliancy, as I unfolded to him gradually the secrets of my inner thoughts. Finally, I told him of the greatness of the Western civilization, and that Japan must no longer sit on the pedestal of her conceit and seclusion, like a pretty doll on its gilded stool, only to be snatched away and be made amusement of by the first rude hand that may dare do it, but that she must henceforth walk forth and seek her own way through the world. Those were profound moments when I took the veil off my heart and let him look into its very depths; and Taro responded to me with all the vigour of his youth.

"We stayed about a fortnight in the hotel, toward the end of which we sold out all our belongings and bought instead fishermen's craft and apparel. Our intention was to be on the water, and seek a chance to get on board an English steamer, which, it was rumoured, was to come up the bay at that time. I knew we would be given a passage by the Englishmen as far as they were concerned; but it was a dangerous venture, after all; if only our authorities knew of, or caught us in the attempt, we were sure to lose our heads. But to be brief, we were successful. And on the 12th day of June, 1864, we were safely landed at the port of London.

"In England we little heeded the silly rudeness of the curious, nor could we lend ourselves to the overworked kindness of the you - poor - heathen sinners style of good Christians. We considered ourselves men with a mission. We were ashamed to pledge a promise to become missionaries, for a free course of study; but we were not ashamed to become humble menials that we might work for our own independent support.

"We worked hard and suffered much. When we had mastered English fairly well we set out on a lecture tour. It was a novelty—novelty always succeeds in England—and we saved enough to enable us to enter a college. Five years sped by as a dream. All that time Taro and I were like one; we always lived together. When I was ill he nursed me by day and by night—sweet and gentle, an angel of love to me. When he was sick, I, in my turn, did for him what brotherly care and tenderness could do, for he grew to be as dear to me as my own life, and more.

"The close of the fifth year of our stay in England brought us the glad news of the mighty change which gradually overtook Japan in favour of introducing European ideas. About the same time our presence in England became known to our home government, and they sent for us; they were sorely in need of anyone who knew anything of any foreign lands. When the news reached us Taro and I said:

"'Our time is come at last!'

"But such of our friends as were good Christians said:

"'Sad! sad! The heathen government are afraid that their people should learn too much of Christianity, and are therefore calling them all back, under false pretences. Sad! sad!' Fortunately, we had not become Christians enough to swallow all this, and we were soon on board a steamer, homeward-bound, with joyous hearts.

"The winter's sea was high now and then, but all went well, and we were now within a day's distance of Yokohama. The night was approaching; darkness fell over the trackless ocean. The ship rushed onward, breaking through the foaming waves; sea-urchins glittered and flowed below, while above, the clear cold sky shone forth with its stars, like revelation! Between heaven and earth, the speckled finiteness and blazing immensity, dashing forward through darkness, I stood agitated on the deck, changing thoughts of past, present, and future, of pride, glory, meekness, and trembling hope, flitting like visions in me! I was silent for many a minute. Taro stood by me; he, too, looked deeply occupied. But his eyes were intently on me, with strange sadness in them.

"But will you forgive it if it was done for love?"

"'Why, what is the matter?' I said to him. He simply replied, 'Oh, nothing!' with a forced smile; but I saw his lips quiver as he said this. My heart became strangely alarmed, as with some unknown apprehension. I hurried him down into the cabin. He sat on the couch, and I too did so, close by him. He again looked up into my face absorbedly. It was a surprise that overtook me this time.

"Taro was no longer the Taro of yesterday, of adventures, of determined looks, of fearless manliness, of youthful vigour. His looks were now those of feminine fondness, tinged with unexpressed fear and timidity.

"He looked excited, but with maidenly coyness. This was so strange, so unfathomable, that I could not help wondering long in silence.

"But Taro broke it suddenly, though with some difficulty:

"'Do you think deceiving is right in some cases?'

"I bluntly answered 'No,' which brought on his face a look of torturing emotion.

"Then after a moment or two he again said:

"'But will you forgive it if it was done for love, and that with no base motive?'

"'I dare say yes,' I answered, 'but why do you ask me such a question?'

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"Taro gave me no reply; instead, to my amazement, he laughed out merrily, and said:

"'Do you st.ll love my sister?'

"'Well—a—yes; but she must be married by this time!' I heaved a deep sigh.

"'Oh! no,' returned Taro, pleasantly, and continued, 'But do you love me still?'

"'You silly boy, what does all this mean?' I demanded. Taro only smiled and looked at me fondly.

"I was never more mystified in my life than during this conversation. All was clear to me, however, when the next day Taro, now grown to be a tall, robust fellow, greeted us in his full, hearty voice, just outside the custom-house of Yokohama—not the Taro of my romantic companionship of the five eventful years, but Taro the brother of my beloved Miyo. For my Taro was my Miyo in disguise, whom I had loved as her brother. The dream was fulfilled, and my story ends here.

"My good audience, it is needless to add that my Miyo and I were soon afterwards married; and such is the story of a Japanese love. Who dares say love, pure and simple, noble and romantic, is impossible in Japan?"

K. T. TAKAHASHI.

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of Mr. Harry Lander's "Lucky Bargee" to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source must be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. W. Lavers, of 31 Asylum Road, Peckham, S.E. Attempts for this week's prize may deal with any subject, and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, January 22nd. Post-cards only, please.

"Countee Collars!"

AN Irishman arriving at New York went into a laundry where a Chinaman was employed to count out the collars. Giving him a slap on the shoulder, which made the Chinaman jump, he exclaimed:

"How are ye, Mike? Shure yours is the first Oirish face oi've seen since oi left home."

The Chinaman, who happened to be counting collars at the time, looked at him severely and went on with his work. The Irishman gave him another slap on the shoulder and said:

"Phwat part ov Oireland did ye come from?"

The Chinaman replied angrily:

"Wayway, mee mee countee collars!"

"It's a loi!" exclaimed Pat, "there's not a county in all Oireland ov that name!"

Why He Spoke the Truth.

"Now," plaintively perorated the perspiring preacher, "is there a man in this congregation who never spoke a cross word to his wife? If there is, let him rise."

Dead silence, in the midst of which a fat, red-faced man of forty solemnly rose to his feet.

"Can you truly say," said the preacher, with a warning look in his eye, "that you never spoke a single cross word to your wife?"

"I can," said the fat man emphatically, "I am a bachelor." (Sensation.)

How the Walls Ran Down.

THE Irishman who went up in the hotel lift without knowing what it was did not recover from the surprise. He relates the story in this way:

"I wint to the hotel, and says I: 'Is Misther Smith in?'

"'Yes,' says the man with the sojer cap. 'Will yez step in?'

"So I steps into the cupboard, and all of a suddint he pulls the rope, and—it's the truth I'se telling yez—the walls of the building began running down to the cellar.

"'Och, murther!' says I, 'what'll become of Bridget and the children which was left below there?'

"Says the sojer-cap man: 'Be aisy, sorr; they'll be all right when yez comes down.'

"'Come down, it is?" says I. 'And it is no cupboard at all, but a haythenish balloon that yez got me in!'

"And wid that the walls stood stock still, and he opened the door, and there I was wid the roof just over my head! And, begorra, that's what saved me from goin' up to the hevins intirely!"

Should Have Told Him.

AN ex-army surgeon, discussing recent scientific discoveries the other day, said the Röntgen rays and the location of bullets brought to mind an old story about a general officer, upon whom, having been wounded in the fleshy part of his leg, the surgeons made many incisions.

At last, growing tired and worn out with pain, he asked if they were nearly through dressing his leg.

"I am looking for the ball," said the operating surgeon.

"Why didn't you say so before?" roared the officer. "I have the ball in my pocket."

Why Women Wear Their Hats Indoors.

"EXCUSE me, sir," said the man in the row behind, "but would you mind asking your wife to remove her hat? I assure you that I cannot see a thing on the stage."

"I'd like to oblige you, sir, but it is impossible," said the man addressed. "We live out of town, and we must get home to-night."

"What has that got to do with it?"

"What has that got to do with it? Why, our train goes twenty minutes after the end of the performance, and it takes her an hour to put that hat on."

How to Clear your Stock.

AT a recent fair in Paris one of the stall-holders who, despite the good weather and the multitude of passers-by, had done very little business, had recourse to an original method of clearing out his stock. While delivering his usual speech on the excellence of his half-franc articles, a gentleman, in a state of the greatest excitement, pushed his way through the crowd, and, in a white fury, exclaimed:

"There you are, you rascal! No wonder you can sell these things at half a franc when you still owe me a franc and a half for them. But the matter shall be looked into. I am going straight away to fetch the police!"

The excited gentleman disappeared. Our salesman trembled in his shoes, and entreated the bystanders to relieve him of his wares. This they were ready enough to do, in the belief that they were about to get all sorts of nice bargains at a third of their real value.

And the trick was done, for the pretended wholesale merchant was merely an accomplice of the "Cheap Jack."

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He Improved.

IN Germany, some weeks ago, a railway flagman at the crossing at a small station thought he had the influenza when all the other employés of the line were getting leave of absence for the same cause, and applied to the company's doctor to be examined.

The doctor could not spare the time to stop at such a small place, so he telegraphed to the flagman to be standing beside the track when the train went past with his tongue out, and he would examine him on "the fly."

The flagman dutifully stood with his tongue out all the time the train was slowly passing his station, and the next day the company received from passengers a dozen complaints of the impertinent conduct of one of its employés at that station.

A Strange Tongue.

SOME members of a German ship's crew had occasion to visit a shipbuilding yard in England, and in the course of their walk entered a paint-shop where two Irishmen were at work.

The visitors talked together in their own language, greatly to the mystification of the British workmen, and at last one of the painters could not restrain his curiosity.

"I say, Mike," said he to his fellow labourer, "and do you know what these fellows are saying?"

"Arrah, now, Pat," answered the second man, "don't be showing your ignorance. They're spakin' shorthand."

The Worst Kind of Bargain.

A THEATRICAL manager told a story against himself the other day. An actor came to him and applied for an engagement. There did not seem to be much need of him, but his demands in the way of salary were very modest, and the manager said to him:

"Well, you may consider yourself engaged. I fancy I can find something for you to do."

The newly-engaged man looked at the manager questioningly.

"How about a contract?" he asked.

"Oh, never mind a contract. We'll have a verbal contract."

There was a look of mild reproach in the eyes of the man as he answered sorrowfully:

"Sir, the last time I made a verbal contract I drew a verbal salary."

The Danger of Kissing.

"MR. CLINKER," said the thrillingly beautiful heroine of this tale, as she turned her head and looked straight into the eyes of the young man, who was sitting as close to her on the sofa as it was possible to get, "there are some things which even a girl of my—er—advancement will not easily brook. When you first entered this room, half-an-hour ago, you bowed formally as you shook hands. did not dream of calling me by my Christian name, and, when you sat down, you took a chair which was at a convenient distance away. You had not——"

"But, my dear Miss Spingler——"

"Don't interrupt me, sir. You had not been here ten minutes before your chair was six feet nearer where I sat. In another five minutes you called me 'Dear.' Shortly afterwards you deliberately sat down on the sofa next to me. It was then that you attempted to take my hand. You need not deny it. You know it is too true. And now, sir——"

"Hear me. I——"

"And now," said the young girl, her slight form trembling with emotion, her eyes blazing, her whole attitude expressive of the deepest concern, "I want you to distinctly understand that if you should so far forget yourself as to attempt to kiss me, you do so at your own peril!"

A Possible Dilemma.

A JUDGE of the old school, loving port wine and hating trouble, is said to have once summed up a very complicated case in the following terms: "You have all heard the evidence, you have also heard what the learned counsel have said. If you believe what the counsel for the plaintiff has told you, your verdict will be for the plaintiff; but if, on the other hand, you believe what the defendant's counsel has told you, then you will give a verdict for the defendant. But if you are like me, and don't believe what either of them has said, then I'll be blowed if I know what you will do."

A Very Severe Mother.

A VERY estimable widow has a son who is far from estimable. His poor mother is nearly broken-hearted. She was confiding her troubles one day to an old and trusted friend.

"I am afraid," said her friend, "that you are not firm enough with John; you are too easy with him."

"On the contrary, I am afraid sometimes that I am too harsh."

"Why, what have you ever done?"

"Oh, I haven't done anything, but I have talked to him a good deal."

"What have you said?"

"Why, I have said, 'John! John! John!' and other severe things."

A Courting Episode.

A YOUNG couple, evidently from the country, were walking down Regent Street one day, apparently looking for something very much in particular. At last they stopped before a large jeweller's window, in which were displayed a number of wedding-rings. They stood by the window for a few moments, discussing some urgent question, the big, clumsy-looking fellow, who measured about six feet, apparently hesitating.

"Go on, George," said the girl, who scarcely reached his elbow. "What's the use of backing out now you've got so far?"

"I don't half like to, Mary," he replied; "that slick-looking fellow in there is sure to grin at me."

"What difference does it make whether he laughs or cries?" exclaimed the girl. "If you haven't the pluck I'll go myself."

"That's it, Mary," was the response; "if you'll do the asking I'll come with you and look on."

Followed by her bashful lover, the little woman marched boldly in and chose the wedding-ring, while her swain twirled his hat, blushed, and looked on. As they left, the shopman gazed after them with a thoughtful air and remarked:

"I admire Mary's pluck, but I shouldn't care to be George ten years from now."

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The Angel of the Revolution

By George Griffith

CHAPTER LVIII. (*continued*).

Within a week everything was working as smoothly as though no revolution had ever taken place. All officials whose honesty there was no reason to suspect, were retained in their offices, while those who were dismissed were replaced without any friction. All the affairs of government were conducted upon purely business principles, just as though the country had been a huge commercial concern, save for the fact that the chief object was efficiency and not profit-making.

Money was abundantly plentiful, and the necessaries of life were cheaper than they had ever been before. Perhaps the principal reason for this happy state of affairs was the fact that law and politics had suddenly ceased to be trades at which money could be made. People were amazed at the rapidity with which public business was transacted.

The President and his Council had at one stroke abrogated every civil and criminal law known to the old Constitution and proclaimed in their place a simple comprehensive code which was practically identical with the Decalogue. To this a final clause was added stating that those who could not exist without breaking any of these laws would not be considered as fit to live in civilised society, and would therefore be effectively removed from the companionship of their fellows.

While the internal affairs of the Federation in America were being thus set in order events had been moving rapidly in other parts of the world. The Tsar, the King of Italy, and General le Gallifet, who was now Dictator of France in all but name, were masters of the Continent of Europe. The Anglo-Teutonic Alliance was a thing of the past. Germany, Austria, and Turkey were completely crushed and the minor powers had succumbed.

Britain, crippled by the terrible cost in ships and men of the victory of the Nile, had evacuated the Mediterranean after dismantling the fortifications of Gibralter and Malta, and had concentrated the remains of her fleets in the home waters to prepare for the invasion, which was now inevitable as soon as fair winds and fine weather made it possible for the war-balloons of the League to cross the water and co-operate with the invading forces.

The Tsar, as had been expected, had not even deigned to reply to Tremayne's summons to disarm, and so the last arrangements for bringing the forces of the Federation into action at the proper time were pushed on with the utmost speed. The blockade of the American and Canadian coasts was rigidly maintained, and no vessels allowed to enter or leave any of the ports. All the war-ships of the League had been withdrawn from the Atlantic, and the great ocean highway remained unploughed by a single keel.

On the 10th of October the *Ithuriel* returned from her second trip to the West, with the refusal of the British Government to recognise the Federation as a duly constituted Power, or to have any dealings with its leaders. "Great Britain," the reply concluded, "will stand or fall alone, and even in the event of ultimate defeat, the King of England will prefer to make terms with the Sovereigns opposed to him rather than with those whose acts have proved them to be beyond the pale of the law of nations."

"Ah!" said Tremayne, as he read the royal words, "the policy which lost the American Colonies for the sake of an idea still rules at Westminster, it seems. But I am not going to let the old Lion be strangled in his den for all that.

"Natas was right when he said that Britain would have to pass through the fire before she would accept the Federation, and so I suppose she must, more's the pity. Still, perhaps it will be all for the best in the long run. You can't expect to root up a thousand-year-old oak as easily as a mushroom that only came up the day before yesterday."

The day after the reply of the British Government had been received, a cypher despatch came from Sydney, *via* San Fransisco, announcing that all was ready for the proclamation of the Federation in Australia, and adding that a large fleet of Chinese and Japanese war-ships had bombarded Brisbane, and was steaming south upon Sydney.

"We must stop those fellows at once," said the President to Arnold, who was with him when he read the despatch. "How soon can you have the *Ithuriel* and half a dozen of the other ships ready to start? This will be a splendid, opportunity for us. We will smash up the heathen Chinee, save Australia, and then proclaim the Federation before popular gratitude has time to cool. Nothing like striking while the iron's hot."

"Almost immediately," replied Arnold. "I have eight ships lying at the rendezvous on the Alleghanies ready to take the air at once, and I can put what fresh cylinders are wanted into the *Ithuriel* in half an hour after we get there. We can reach Australia in about seventy hours, and probably get to Sydney just as the fun is beginning. Are you coming with us?"

"Yes. Everything is going on perfectly here, and I can easily get away for a few days. We will go on board at once."

It was then two o'clock on the afternoon of the 11th. Two hours later the aerial squadron took the air, crossed the Pacific in three days, and arrived off Port Jackson just as the invading fleet had forced its way into the harbour.

It went to work with swift and terrible effectiveness upon the war-ships crowded into the narrow waters of the inlet. The Celestials, who had never even heard of the air-ships before their shells began rending their vessels to fragments, took them for supernatural demons of the air sent by the gods to destroy them.

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Within ten minutes after the terrible cannonade began they had fallen into utter panic and completely lost control of their ships. Steaming hither and thither in wild attempts to get out into the open water, they collided and rammed and sank each other almost as fast as they were sunk by the shells rained upon them from the air. Tremayne's orders were not to spare a single craft, and they were carried out to the letter.

It was the first battle in the war between civilisation and semi-barbarism, and that was to be a war of extermination. By nightfall not a ship or torpedo-boat of the whole fleet was left that had not either been captured or run ashore. The next morning the signal of the Revolution was flashed throughout the Colonies, and within twenty-four hours the plain blood-red flag of the Federation was floating over all the Government houses in Australasia.

CHAPTER LIX.

ALONE AGAINST THE WORLD.

IT is now time to return to Britain, to the land which the course of events had so far appeared to single out as the battle-ground upon which was to be fought the Armageddon of the Western World—that conflict of the giants, the issue of which was to decide whether the Anglo-Saxon race was still to remain in the forefront of civilisation and progress, or whether it was to fall, crushed and broken, beneath the assaults of enemies descending upon the motherland of the Anglo-Saxon nations; whether the valour and personal devotion, which for a thousand years had scarcely known a defeat by flood or field, was still to pursue its course of victory, or whether it was to succumb to weight of numbers and mechanical discipline, reinforced by means of assault and destruction which so far had turned the world-war of 1904 into a succession of gigantic butcheries, such as had never been known before in the history of human strife.

When the allied fleets, bearing the remains of the British and German Armies which had been driven out of the Netherlands, reached England, and the news of the crowning disaster of the war in Europe was published in detail in the newspapers, the popular mind seemed suddenly afflicted with a paralysis of stupefaction.

Men looked back over the long series of triumphs in which British valour and British resolution had again and again proved themselves invulnerable to the assaults of overflowing numbers. They thought of the glories of the Peninsula, of the unbreakable strength of the thin red line at Waterloo, of the magnificent madness of Balaclava, and the invincible steadiness and discipline that had made Inkerman a word to be remembered with pride as long as the English name endured.

Then their thoughts reverted to the immediate past, and they heard the shock of colossal armaments, compared with which the armies of the past appeared but pigmies in strength. They saw empires defended by millions of soldiers crushed in a few weeks, and a wave of conquest sweep in one unbroken roll from end to end of a continent in less time than it would have taken Napoleon or Wellington to have fought a single campaign. Huge fortresses, rendered, as men had believed, impregnable by the employment of every resource known to the most advanced military science, had been reduced to heaps of defenceless ruins in a few hours by a bombardment, under which their magnificent artillery had lain as impotent as though they had been the culverins of three hundred years ago.

It seemed like some hideous nightmare of the nations, in which Europe had gone mad, revelling in superhuman bloodshed and destruction, a conflict in which more than earthly forces had been let loose, accomplishing a carnage so immense that the mind could only form a dim and imperfect conception of it. And now this red tide of desolation had swept up to the western verge of the Continent, and was there gathering strength and volume day by day against the hour when it should burst and oversweep the narrow strip of water which separated the inviolate fields of England from the blackened and blood-stained waste that it had left behind it from the Russian frontier to the German ocean.

It seemed impossible, and yet it was true. The first line of defence, the hitherto invincible fleet, magnificently as it had been managed, and heroically as it had been fought, had failed in the supreme hour of trial. It had failed not because the sailors of Britain had done their duty less valiantly than they had done in the days of Rodney and Nelson, but simply because the conditions of naval warfare had been entirely changed, because the personal equation had been almost eliminated from the problem of battle, and because the new warfare of the seas had been waged rather with machinery than with men.

In all the war not a single battle had been fought at close quarters; there had been plenty of instances of brilliant manœuvring, of torpedo boats running the gauntlet and hurling their deadly missiles against the sides of battle-ships and cruisers, and of ships rammed and sunk in a few instants by consummately-handled opponets, but the days of boarding and cutting out, of night surprises and fire ships, had gone by for ever.

The irresistible artillery with which modern science had armed the war-ships of all nations had made these feats impossible, and so had placed the valour which achieved them out of court. Within the last few weeks scarcely a day had passed but had witnessed some mighty ironclad or splendid cruiser, which had set out a miracle of offensive and defensive strength, return little better than a floating ruin, wrecked and shattered almost beyond recognition by the awful battle-storm through which she had passed.

The magnificent armament which had held the Atlantic route had come back represented only by a few crippled ships almost unfit for any further service. True, they and those which never returned had rendered a splendid account of themselves before the enemy, but the fact remained—they were not defeated, but they were no longer able to perform the Titanic task which had been allotted to them.

So, too, with the Mediterranean fleet, which, so far as sea-fighting was concerned, had achieved the most splendid triumph of the war. It had completely destroyed the enemy opposed to it, but the victory had been purchased at such a terrible price that, but for the squadron which had come to its aid, it would hardly have been able to reach home in safety.

In a word, the lesson of the struggle on the sea had been that modern artillery was just as effective whether fired by Englishmen, Frenchmen, or Russians, that where a torpedo struck a war-ship was crippled, no matter what the nationality or the relative valour of her crew, and that when once the ram found its mark the ship that it struck went down, no matter what flag she was flying.

And then behind and beyond all that was definitely known in England of the results of the war, there were vague rumours of calamities and catastrophes in more distant parts of the world which seemed to promise nothing less than universal anarchy and the submergence of civilisation under some all-devouring wave of barbarism.

All regular communications with the East had been stopped for several weeks; that India was lost was guessed by intuition rather than known as a certainty. Australia was as isolated from Britain as though it had been on another planet, and now every one of the Atlantic cables had suddenly ceased to respond to the stimulus of the electric current. No ships came from the East, or West, or South. The British ports were choked with fleets of useless merchantmen to which the markets of the world were no longer open.

Some few venturesome craft that had set out to explore the now silent ocean had never returned, and every way

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ship that could be made fit for service was imperatively needed to meet the now inevitable attack on the shores of the English Channel and the southern portions of the North Sea. Only one messenger had arrived from the outside world since the remains of Admiral Beresford's fleet had returned from the Mediterranean, and she had come not by land or sea but through the air.

On the 12th of October an air-ship had been seen flying at an incredible speed across the south of England. She had reached London and touched the ground during the night on Hampstead Heath; the next day she had descended again in the same place, taken a single man on board, and then vanished into space again. What her errand had been is well known to the reader, but outside the members of the Cabinet Council no one in England, save the Kinghimself, knew the object of her mission.

For fifteen days after that event the enemy across the water made no sign, although from the coast of Kent round about Deal and Dover, could be seen fleets of transports and war vessels hurrying along the French coast, and on clear days a thousand telescopes turned towards the French shore made visible the ominous clusters of moving black spots above the land which betokened the presence of the terrible machines which had wrought such havoc on the towns and fortresses of Europe.

It was only the calm before the final outburst of the storm. The Tsar and his allies were marshalling their hosts for the invasion and collecting transports and fleets of war-vessels to convoy them. For several days strong north-westerly gales had made the sea impassable for the war-balloons, as though to the very last the wind and waves were conspiring to defend their ancient mistress. But this could not last for ever.

Sooner or later the winds must sink or change, and then these war-hawks of the air would wing their flight across the silver streak, and Portsmouth. and Dover, and London would be as defenceless beneath their attack as Berlin, Vienna, and Hamburg had been. And after them would come the millions of the League descending like a locust swarm upon the fields of eastern England, and after that would come the deluge.

But the old Lion of the seas was not skulking in his lair, or trembling at the advent of his enemies, however numerous and mighty they might be. On sea not a day passed but some daring raid was made on the transports passing to and fro in the narrow seas, and all the while a running fight was kept up with cruisers and battle-ships that approached too near to the still inviolate shore. So surely as they did so the signals flashed along the coast; and if they escaped at all from the fierce sortie that they provoked, it was with shot-riddled sides and battered top-works, sure signs that the Lion still had claws, and could strike home with them.

On shore, from Land's End to John o' Groats, and from Holyhead to the Forelands, everything that could be done was being done to prepare for the struggle with the invader. It must, however, be confessed that, in comparison with the enormous forces of the League, the ranks of the defenders were miserably scanty. Forty years of universal military service on the Continent had borne their fruits.

Soldiers are not made in a few weeks or months; and where the League had millions in the field, Britain, even counting the remnant of her German allies, that had been brought over from Antwerp, could hardly muster hundreds of thousands. All told, there were less than a million men available for the defence of the country; and should the landing of the invaders be successfully effected, not less than six millions of men, trained to the highest efficiency, and flushed with the rapid succession of unparalleled victories, would be hurled against them.

This was the legitimate outcome of the policy to which Britain had adhered since first she had maintained a standing army instead of pursuing the ancient policy of making every man a soldier, which had won the triumphs of Crecy and Agincourt. She had trusted everything to her sea-line of defence. Now that was practically broken, and it seemed inevitable that her second line, by reason of its miserable inadequacy, should fail her in a trial which no one had ever dreamt it would have to endure.

A very grave aspect was given to the situation by the fact that the great mass of the industrial population seemed strangely indifferent to the impending catastrophe which was hanging over the land.

Vague threats of "eating the Russians alive" if they ever did dare to come were heard, but beyond this, and apart from the regular army and the volunteers, men went about their daily avocations very much as usual, grumbling at the ever-increasing price of food, and here and there breaking out into bread riots wherever it was suspected that some wealthy man was trying to corner food for his own commercial benefit, but making no serious or combined efforts to prepare for a general rising in case the threatened invasion became a fact.

Such was the general state of affairs in Britain when, on the night of the 27th of October, the north-west gales sank suddenly to a calm, and the dawn of the 28th brought the news from Dover to London that the war-balloons of the League had taken the air and were crossing the Straits.

CHAPTER LX.

THE BATTLE OF DOVER.

UNTIL the war of 1904 it had been an undisputed axiom in naval warfare that a territorial attack upon an enemy's coast by a fleet was foredoomed to failure unless that enemy's fleet had been either crippled beyond effective action, or securely blockaded in distant ports. As an axiom secondary to this, it was also held that it would be impossible for an invading force, although convoyed by a powerful fleet, to make good its footing upon any portion of a hostile coast defended by forts mounting heavy long-range guns.

These principles have held good throughout the history of naval warfare from the time when Sir Walter Raleigh first laid them down in the early portion of his "History of the World," written after the destruction of the Spanish Armada.

But now two elements had been introduced which altered the conditions of naval warfare even more radically than one of them had changed those of military warfare. Had it not been for this the attack upon the shores of England made by the commanders of the League would probably either have been a failure, or it would have stopped at a demonstration of force as did that of the great Napoleon in 1803.

The portion of the Kentish coast selected for the attack was that stretching from Folkestone to Deal, and it would perhaps have been difficult to find in the whole world any portion of sea-coast more strongly defended than this was on the morning of October 28th, 1904, and yet, as the event proved, the fortresses which lined it were as useless and impotent for defence as the old Martello towers of a hundred and fifty years before would have been.

As the war-balloons rose into the air from the heights above Boulogne good telescopes at Dover enabled their possessors to count no less than seventy-five of them. Fifty of these were quite newly constructed, and were of a much improved type, as they had been built in view of the practical experience gained by the first fleet.

This aerial fleet divided into three squadrons, one, numbering twenty-five, steered south-westward in the direction of Folkestone, twelve shaped their course towards Deal, and the remaining thirty-eight steered directly across the Straits to Dover. As they approached the English coast they continually rose until by the time they had reached the land, aided by the light south-easterly breeze which was then blowing, they floated at a height of more than five thousand feet.

All this while not a warship or a transport had put to

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sea. The whole fleet of the League lay along the coast of France between Calais and Dieppe, under the protection of shore batteries so powerful that it would have been madness for the British fleet to have assumed the offensive with regard to them. With the exception of two squadrons reserved for a possible attack upon Portsmouth and Harwich, all that remained from the disasters and costly victories of the war of the once mighty British naval armament was massed together for the defence of that portion of the coast which would evidently have to bear the brunt of the attack of the League.

Ranged along the coast from Folkestone to Deal was an armament consisting of forty-five battle-ships of the first, second, and third classes, supported by fifteen coast-defence ironclads, seventy armoured and thirty-two unarmoured cruisers, forty gunboats, and a hundred and fifty torpedo boats.

Such was the magnificent fleet that patrolled the waters of the narrow sea as impotent for the time being as a fleet of Thames steamboats would have been in face of the tactics employed against it by the League. Had the enemy's fleet but come out into the open, as it would have been compelled to do under the old conditions of warfare, to fight its way across the narrow strip of water, there is little doubt but that the issue of the day would have been very different, and that what had been left of the ships would have been driven back, shattered and defeated, to the shelter of the French shore batteries.

But, in accordance with the invariable tactics of the League, the first and most deadly assault was delivered from the air. The war-balloons stationed themselves above the fortifications on land, totally ignoring the presence of the fleet, and a few minutes after ten o'clock began to rain their deadly hail of explosives down upon them. Fifteen were placed over Dover Castle, and five over the fort on the Admiralty Pier, while the rest were distributed over the town and the forts on the hills above it.

In an hour everything was in a state of the most horrible confusion. The town was on fire in a hundred places, from the effects of the fire-shells. The Castle hill seemed as if it had been suddenly turned into a volcano; jets of bright flame kept leaping up from its summit and sides, followed by thunderous explosions and masses of earth and masonry hurled into the air, mingled with guns and fragments of human bodies.

The end of the Admiralty Pier, with its huge blocks of stone wrenched asunder and pulverised by incessant explosions of dynamite and emmensite, collapsed and subsided into the sea, carrying fort, guns, and magazine with it; and all along the height of the Shakespeare cliff the earthworks had been blown up and scattered into dust, and a huge portion of the cliff itself had been blasted out and hurled down on to the beach.

Meanwhile the victims of this terrible assault had, in the nature of the case, been able to do nothing but keep up a vertical fire, in the hope of piercing the gas-envelopes of the balloons, and so bringing them to the earth. For more than an hour this fusillade produced no effect; but at length the concentrated fire of several Maxim and Nordenfelt guns, projecting a hail of missiles into the sky, brought about a result which was even more disastrous to the town than it was to its assailants.

Four of the aerostats came within the zone swept by the bullets. Riddled through and through, their gas-holders collapsed, and their cars plunged downwards from a height of more than 5,000 feet. A few seconds later four frightful explosions burst forth in different parts of the town, for the four cargoes exploded simultaneously as they struck the earth.

The emmensite and dynamite tore whole streets of houses to fragments, and hurled them far and wide into the air to fall back again on other parts of the town, and at the same time the fire-shells ignited, and set the ruins blazing like so many furnaces. No more shots were fired into the air after that. There was nothing for it but for British valour to bow to the inevitable and evacuate the town and what remained of its fortifications, and so with sad and heavy hearts the remnant of the brave defenders turned their faces inland, leaving Dover to its fate. Meanwhile exactly the same havoc had been wrought upon Folkestone and Deal. Hour after hour the merciless work continued until by three o'clock in the afternoon there was not a gun left upon the whole range of coast that was capable of firing a shot.

All this time the ammunition tenders of the aerial fleet had been winging their way to and fro across the Strait, constantly renewing the shells of the war balloons.

As soon as it began to grow dusk the naval battle commenced. Numerically speaking, the attacking force was somewhat inferior to that of the defenders, but now the second element, which so completely altered the tactics of sea fighting, was for the first time in the war brought into play.

As the battle-ships of the League steamed out to engage the opponents, who were thirsting to avenge the destruction that had been wrought upon the land, a small flotilla of twenty-five insignificant-looking little craft with neither masts nor funnels, and looking more like half-submerged elongated turtles than anything else, followed in tow close under their quarters. Hardly had the furious cannonade broken out into thunder and flame along the two opposing lines than these strange craft sank gently and silently beneath the waves. They were submarine vessels belonging to the French navy, an improved type of the *Zédé* class which had been in existence for more than ten years.

These vessels were capable of sinking to a depth of twenty feet and remaining for four hours without returning to the surface. They were propelled by twin-screws worked by electricity at a speed of twenty knots, and were provided with an electric search-light which enabled them to find the hulls of hostile ships in the dark.

Each carried three torpedoes, which could be launched from a tube, forward, so as to strike the hull of the doomed ship from beneath. As soon as the torpedo was discharged the submarine boat spun round on her heel and headed away at full speed in an opposite direction, out of the area of the explosion.

The effects of such terrible, and, indeed, irresistible engines of naval warfare were soon made manifest upon the ships of the British fleet. In the heat of the battle, with every gun in action, and raining a hail of shot and shell upon her adversary, a great battle-ship would receive an unseen blow, struck in the dark upon her most vulnerable part, a huge column of water would rise up from under her side, and a few minutes later the splendid fabric would heel over and go down like a floating volcano, to be quenched by the waves that closed over her.

But as if it were not enough that the defending fleet should be attacked from the surface of the water and the depths of the sea, the war-balloons, winging their way out from the scene of ruin that they had wrought on shore, soon began to take their part in the work of death and destruction.

Each of them was provided with a mirror set a little in front of the bow of the car, at an angle which could be varied according to the elevation. A little forward of the centre of the car was a tube fixed on a level with the centre of the mirror. The ship selected for destruction was brought under the car, and the speed of the balloon was regulated so that the ship was relatively stationary to it.

As soon as the glare from one of the funnels could be seen through the tube reflected in the centre of the mirror a trap was sprung in the floor of the car, and a shell charged with dynamite, which, it will be remembered, explodes vertically downwards, was released, and, where the calculations were accurately made, passed down the funnel and

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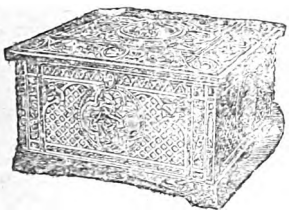

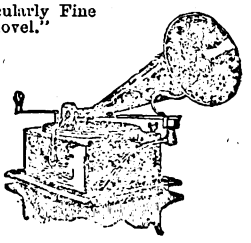

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exploded in the interior of the vessel, bursting her boilers and reducing her to a helpless wreck at a single stroke.*

Every time this horribly ingenious contrivance was successfully brought into play a battleship or a cruiser was either sunk or reduced to impotence. In order to make their aim the surer the aerostats descended to within three hundred yards of their prey, and where the missile failed to pass through the tunnel it invariably struck the deck close to it, tearing up the armour sheathing and wrecking the funnel itself so completely that the steaming-power of the vessel was very seriously reduced.

All night long the battle raged incessantly along a semicircle some twelve miles long, the centre of which was Dover. Crowds of anxious watchers on the shore watched the continuous flashes of the guns through the darkness, varied ever and anon by some tremendous explosion which told the fate of a warship that had fired her last shot.

All night long the incessant thunder of the battle rolled to and fro along the echoing coast, and when morning broke the light dawned upon a scene of desolation and destruction on sea and shore such as had never been witnessed before in the history of warfare. On land were the smoking ruins of houses, still smouldering in the remains of the fires which had consumed them; forts which twenty-four hours before had grinned defiance at the enemy were shapeless heaps of earth and stone and armour-plating torn into great jagged fragments; and on sea were a few half-crippled wrecks, the remains of the British fleet, with their flags still flying and such guns as were not disabled firing their last rounds at the victorious foe.

To the eastward of these about half the fleet of the League, in but little better condition, was advancing in now overwhelming force upon them, and behind these again a swarm of troop-ships and transports were heading out from the French shore. About an hour after dawn the *Centurion*, the last of the British battle-ships, was struck by one of the submarine torpedoes, broke in two, and went down with her flag flying and her guns blazing away to the last moment. So ended the battle of Dover, the most disastrous sea-fight in the history of the world, and the death-struggle of the Mistress of the Seas.

The last news of the tremendous tragedy reached the now panic-stricken capital half an hour before the receipt of similar tidings from Harwich, announcing the destruction of the defending fleet and forts, and the capture of the town by exactly the same means as those employed against Dover. Nothing now lay between London and the invading forces but the utterly inadequate army and the lines of fortifications which could not be expected to offer any more effective resistance to the assault of the war-balloons, than had those of the three towns on the Kentish coast.

CHAPTER LXI.

Beleaguered London.

A month had passed since the battle of Dover. It had been a month of incessant fighting, of battles by day and night, heroic defences and dearly-bought victories, but still of constant triumphs and irresistible progress for the ever-increasing legions of the League. From sunrise to sunrise the roar of artillery, the rattle of musketry, and the clash of steel had never ceased to sound to the north and south of London as, over battlefield after battlefield, the two hosts which had poured in constant streams through Harwich and Dover had fought their way, literally mile by mile, towards the capital of the modern world.

Day and night the fighting never stopped. As soon as two hostile divisions had fought each other to a standstill, and from sheer weariness of the flesh the battle died down in one part of the huge arena, the flame sprang up in another, and raged on with ever-renewed fury. Outnumbered four and five to one in every engagement, and with the terrible war-balloons raining death on them from the clouds, the British armies had eclipsed all the triumphs of the long array of their victories by the magnificent devotion that they showed in the hour of the death-struggle of the Empire.

The glories of Inkermann and Balaclava, of Albuera and Waterloo, paled before the achievements of the whole-souled heroism displayed by the British soldiery standing, as it were, with its back to the wall, and fighting, not so much with any hope of victory, for that was soon seen to be a physical impossibility, but with the invincible determination not to permit the invader to advance on London save over the dead bodies of its defenders.

Such a gallant defence had never been made before in the face of such irresistible odds. When the soldiers of the League first set foot on British soil the defending armies of the North and South had, with the greatest exertions, been brought up to a fighting strength of about twelve hundred thousand men. So stubborn had been the heroism with which they had disputed the progress of their enemies that by the time that the guns of the League were planted on the heights that commanded the Metropolis, more than a million and a half of men had gone down under the hail of British bullets and the rush of British bayonets.

Of all the battle-fields of this the bloodiest war in the history of human strife none had been so deeply dyed with blood as had been the fair and fertile English gardens and meadows over which the hosts of the League had fought their way to the confines of London. Only the weight of overwhelming numbers, reinforced by engines of destruction which could strike without the possibility of effective retaliation, had made their progress possible.

Had they met their heroic foes as they had met them in the days of the old warfare, their superiority of numbers would have availed them but little. They would have been hurled back and driven into the sea, and not a man of them all would have left British soil alive had it been but a question of military attack and defence.

But this was not a war of men. It was a war of machines, and those who wielded the most effective machinery for the destruction of life won battle after battle as a matter of course, just as a man armed with a repeating rifle would overcome a better man armed with a bow and arrow.

Natas had formed an entirely accurate estimate of the policy of the leaders of the League when he told Tremayne in the library at Alanmere, that they would concentrate all their efforts on the reduction of London. The rest of the kingdom had been for the present entirely ignored.

London was the heart of the British Empire and of the English-speaking world, for the matter of that, and therefore it had been determined to strike one deadly blow at the vital centre of the whole huge organism. That paralysed, the rest must fall to pieces of necessity. The fleet was destroyed, and every soldier that Britain could put into the field had been mustered for the defence of London. Therefore the fall of London meant the conquest of Britain.

(To be continued.)

* This is merely a modification of the Range-Finder now in use for long-range artillery.—Author.

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The Brain Gymnasium.

ON this page, under the title, "The Brain Gymnasium," will appear each week a series of puzzles calculated to occupy the attention of the competitors, with interest and profit to themselves, during the long winter evenings. Many of the tasks set will be comparatively easy of solution, while others will be designed with a view to taxing the abilities of the most proficient in this direction.

In each of the competitions a prize of ten shillings will be awarded to the sender of the first correct solution dealt with, and to the sender of the next five c rrect ones will be presented, in the case of the odd number competitions, one of our silver pencil cases, and, in the case of the even number competitions, a copy of a popular six-shilling novel.

Solutions must be written on separate postcards, and must reach the Editor, SHORT STORIES, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by Monday, January 29th, 1900. Mark the postcards "Brain Gymnasium, No. 16," "Brain Gymnasium, No. 17," etc., according to the number of the competition of which the solution is sent.

No. 16.

A C X B Y Z
B F E D C A

* * * * * *

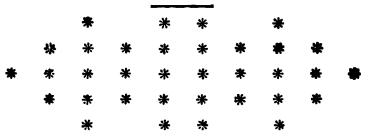
FOR the above cryptogram, the alphabet has been numbered according to a certain rule. If in place of the above letters their cryptogram be inserted, it will be found that in each case the second row is exactly twice the value of the first. Add the two lines together, and put the corresponding ordinary alphabet letter represented by the figure. A word signifying "a prank" will then be found.

No. 17.

A A B C E E E E H I L L N
N O O R R R S S T T T W U

WITH the above letters form six words, and arrange them so that the first and every alternate letter form together the name of a royal residence.

No. 18.



THE central horizontal line represents the name of a British hero. Using the letters contained in it, fill in the other asterisks so that the eight vertical rows, excluding the first and last, give words signifying "a wand," "to register," "a poem," "grants," "a theatre," "a measure of length," "one defeated," and "a conjunction."

No. 19.

H H S F L L N T F T H F R N G P N N T T H F R.

THE above are the consonants in their proper order of a well-known proverb. Fill in the vowels.

No. 20.

THE following cryptogram represents a well-known quotation from Longfellow:

H P T S K N G X K M N S G B E I V I G F U P Q O V I G S T V V I, V I G S G B T F P P D T T E U T P M C T V Z G B T T P F U U!

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES, Dec. 30.

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No. 2.

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R	A	G	E
A	G	E	S
P	E	S	T

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No. 4. Nore; fOrty; VIctoria; Sun; fIght; traiN drEnch; danceS; Stifle. — NOISINESS.

No. 5. HETEROGENEOUSNESS.

No. 6. EGO.

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SHORT STORIES

No. 578.] [One Penny.

For the Week Ending January 27th, 1900.

The King and the Picture.

The king wanted a picture; not that he had not many fine paintings in his miles of galleries, paintings ancient and paintings modern, paintings allegorical, paintings historical, paintings sacred, paintings profane, paintings patriotic, paintings poetic, paintings of people, and paintings of things, paintings of peasants and paintings of kings. But this was to be a very special picture; it must represent the honour of the country by depicting her in the act of winning one of her most famous battles, it must pay a tribute to her army and to her generals by representing the enemy in the very moment of defeat and the conquerors in the grandeur of a glorious victory, thus appealing to and inspiring the patriotism of all future generations.

And, above all, it must represent the King himself—his honour and his courage. His must be the central figure, he must be shewn as leading those gallant legions to victory, his must be the individuality which should impress itself on all beholders.

But who should paint this masterpiece? It must be done by skilled hands—very skilful, for although many of the leading officers, and men, too, for that matter, might sit for their portraits, this could not apply to the enemy, and then the whole scene must be drawn from description, and the right position must be accorded to the author and designer of it all so that the right impression should not fail to be given.

Courtiers, artists, military experts, critics, favourites, were all consulted. All had their pet painter, all had their own theories about the picture, all hoped to gain

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something out of the transaction, and a most overpowering and perplexing list of candidates was submitted to the Royal choice.

At last a selection was made, M. Blanc, a celebrated painter of historic scenes being the favoured artist. Then followed the question of price, and this was necessarily large, for, apart from the market value of the painter's own skill, much expense must be incurred. Journeys to the battlefield for scenery, models, interviews with celebrated men who figured in the war so as to secure their accounts and their likenesses—all these things would cost money, so finally the price was agreed at the respectable figure of 20,000 francs (£800).

The painter set to work with alacrity and earnestness. He was to produce a masterpiece, and one which from its position should be constantly before the eyes of Europe. He felt that his country's honour was to some extent intrusted to his keeping, while he had to contend with the personal jealousy of many, who, just as the actors in a piece all want the best parts, each desired to have a position of the greatest honour and dignity.

Patiently and conscientiously M. Blanc executed his task, hours both early and late were spent in the studio, and the time of so-called recreation was generally passed in the company of those who by their brilliant descriptions and spirited anecdotes seemed to bring the whole scene before his very eyes with vivid portraiture.

The huge canvas began to teem with life and to grow into unity. Friends and acquaintances, admirers and even opponents sang its praises, it would be the picture of the year—the age—the century—M. Blanc would never need to paint again except for pleasure

But meanwhile all was not smooth in the life of the honoured artist. Royalty knows nothing of time or engagements, and the king kept pressing for the delivery of the picture at the earliest possible moment: so under pressure poor M. Blanc worked early and late, spent money almost recklessly on journeys and on models, and had to allow two unwelcome guests to take up their permanent abode in his house, their names being sleeplessness and care.

Only too soon health began to fail, and ways and means became matters of increasing difficulty. But then the honour of painting a picture for the King! and then the 20,000 francs for which the word of the King stood pledged.

"Courage," he would say, "it will only be for a little longer, and then my work, my great work will be done. Then a grateful King will pay me the price, and a grateful country will do me just honour."

At last the finishing touches were given, courtiers, generals, nobles, even the King himself visited the *atelier*, all were charmed, delighted, enraptured. Even rival artists, in their Bohemian generosity, confessed ungrudgingly that the work was a great one, and that Blanc had proved himself worthy to paint the picture for the King.

And Blanc himself—now that the work was done, he could scarcely bring himself to part with it: it had been his life for many a long month, his whole being had gone out into it, his whole self was in every part: it seemed as if all he had hitherto done was absorbed into this one great work, it had exhausted him. But now for the remedy: true the *atelier* would be empty, but then the walls of the world-renowned picture gallery would hold his treasure: true his purse was exhausted, but then the King would soon replenish that: true his eye was dimmed, his appetite impaired and his sleep fitful, but was he not "*le grand* Blanc," who had painted the picture for the King?

Even rival artists, in their Bohemian generosity, confessed ungrudgingly that the work was a great one.

The great event is over. The great picture complete in every detail, gorgeously framed, as became a scene of so great importance and such great characters, has been conveyed to the palace with the utmost care, and placed in the position of honour. Blanc is a great man, every journal contains notices of his masterpiece, but he himself feels as though he had lost a child, and notwithstanding all the congratulations which pour upon him, he is oppressed with a sort of presentiment of impending evil.

He is seated in his now empty studio feeling the reaction after the strain from which he has really suffered, which he had scarcely realized when the bell of his *appartement* announces a visitor. The visitor is the King's Equerry.

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"Good-morning, M. Blanc. You are, I regret to see, not looking as well as your friends could wish."

"Well, my general, you see I have had little time to attend to my health, or to think of anything but the King's order for some time."

"Aha, we are all like that in his service. When he orders there must be no rest, eh?"

"Certainly, I found it so. But tell me, my general, does his majesty really like the picture?"

"Without doubt he does. I do not think he has any that pleases him so much; in fact he is almost tedious in the way he talks about it, and will have everyone admire it."

"So much the better for me, but I hope he does something more than admire it."

"Ah, you sly rogue, I suppose you mean has he paid for it? Well, that is the business which has brought me here this morning."

"And I am truly thankful to hear it, for I am absolutely what our English neighbours call stoney broke."

"Ah, well, we can soon mend that. Here, count these notes, and sign this receipt, for I have to attend a review in half-an-hour."

With almost feverish haste the artist took the notes and counted them; something seemed wrong, again and again he went through them with the same result. At last he said: "My General, is this what the King sent me?"

"Certainly," replied the Equerry. "do you think me capable of being dishonourable in such a delicate matter?"

"By no means, but here is the fact: the King agreed with me for twenty thousand francs, and you have brought me sixteen thousand."

"Twenty thousand francs! Blanc, you must be mad to think of such a sum."

"Very far from it. I neither would nor could have painted the picture for a sou less. It has cost me what I shall never regain, and what money cannot buy, but still the 20,000 francs is the price, as many persons know, and those 20,000 francs I intend to have."

"Softly, my friend. This language may cost you very dear; you are implying that somebody has cheated you, either the King or myself: if the former, you know he has rather an unpleasant way of dealing with persons who offend him, and if the latter, I am at your service when and where you please."

"I accuse no one," said Blanc, "and I will only ask you to give me your word of honour that this is the sum actually sent by the King."

"On the faith of a general it is," said the Equerry. "Now be a sensible fellow and sign my receipt, which you see says, 'Received of General Richeton the price of the picture.' Why, man, the few francs about which you make such a fuss are only the King's margin."

It seemed that there was no more to be said, so Blanc, with many a protest, signed the receipt, by which he stated that he had received the price of the picture, and wished his visitor good-morning.

"Softly, my friend, this language may cost you very dear."

After he was left alone he again thought very carefully over the whole incident and at last resolved for the satisfaction of his own mind and the honour of the King to lay the whole matter privately before the King himself, and as he had the right of entrance to the palace, and remembered that the General had told him he was going to the review, he thought no time like the present, and without further delay than was needful to change his dress he set forth, and arriving at the private entrance he asked if he might see the King.

The answer was in the affirmative, and in a few moments he was admitted to the King's cabinet, and received in a very courteous manner.

"Well, M. Blanc, are you come to get an order for another picture?"

"No, your majesty, but I am come to ask whether the one I have had the honour to execute still gives pleasure."

"Certainly it does, how can you doubt it? Have not I told you so a hundred times? Why, you artists are so sensitive that you require constant praise."

"No, your majesty, I do not want praise, but I had a very special reason for the liberty I have taken in repeating the question."

"Oh, never mind, I am quite satisfied; but, M. Blanc, there is one thing which does not satisfy me, that is the price, it is terrible."

"Your majesty astonishes me."

"I find it terrible, I assure you, I never seem to be able to get money; in fact I have had to deny myself most unpleasantly in order to pay you this money."

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"But the margin is very great, your majesty."

"The margin! What does the man mean?"

"I mean, your majesty, that there is a great difference between 20,000 francs and 16,000 francs."

"And what in the world has that got to do with me?"

"Because 16,000 francs is the exact sum which I have this morning had the honour to receive from your majesty as payment for the picture which I was ordered to paint for 20,000."

"Is this true?" said the King, turning a shade more livid than his wont.

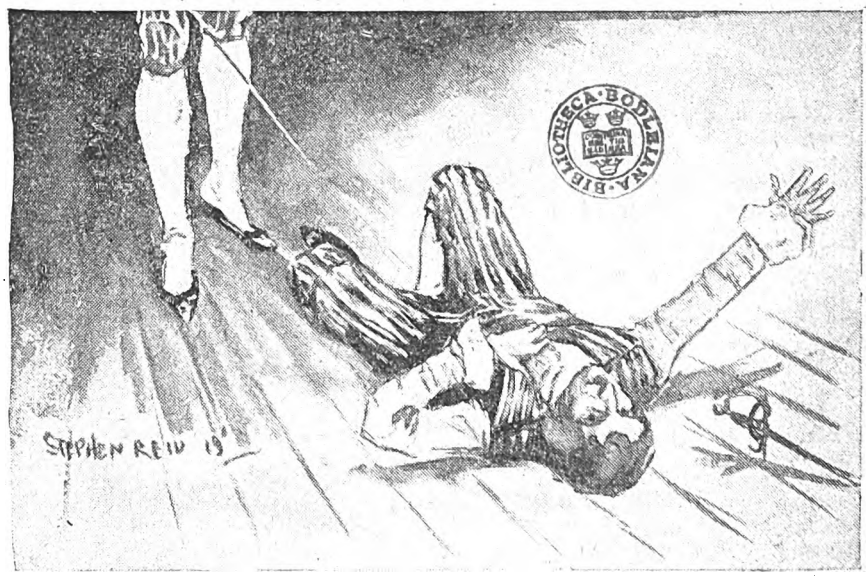
"Perfectly true, your majesty. These identical notes were put into my hands scarcely an hour ago by your majesty's chief Equerry, and I was distinctly told that I must expect no more."

"But how did he account for the difference?"

"Your majesty, he called it 'the King's margin.'"

"The accursed scoundrel," said the King, "this is not the first act of the kind, by many, of which I suspect him, but alas, what can I do? Oh! Blanc, any position is preferable to that of a king, and I only hope if the day comes that my country is in a strait it may not prove that the men whom she now trusts have treated her as they have treated me. Now leave me to think over this business."

* * *



M. Blanc sank heavily to the ground, and, murmuring "Ah, my picture!" expired.

It was evening verging into night. A grand assembly filled the salons of one of the most accomplished hostesses of the day. Wit and wisdom, beauty and rank, wealth and valour united to form a gathering that it would be difficult to surpass. Among the guests was the wearied and yet strikingly handsome figure of M. Blanc, while in another part of the salon might have been seen the flashing decorations and the gay uniform of the chief Equerry.

As the evening passed, it so happened that M. Blanc found himself engaged in conversation with his hostess within a very short distance of the Equerry. There occurred one of those sudden and inexplicable lulls which do sometimes hush a large assembly, and a single voice was heard asking the strange question:

"Madame, did you ever hear of the King's margin?"

"Certainly not, my friend," was the reply. "The King's margin! What do you mean?"

"Ah, madame, I too never heard of it until this morning, and then I was not pleased at discovering it. But it seems that the person who can give all information on the subject—better even than the King himself—is the chief Equerry."

By this time no little curiosity was aroused, all eyes except one pair, were turned on the painter, and he was questioned on every side and urged to explain himself. At length, with a very apparent struggle to master his feelings, he began the account of his picture, his toils, his hopes and his fears, and when all were on the tip-toe of expectation, he closed his story with a calm account of the episode of the morning. Many of the guests heard the whole statement, and when he had ceased there was an almost feverish haste to resume the buzz of general conversation,

Scarcely had the conversation again become general when M. Blanc felt a sharp touch on the shoulder, and, turning round, met the angry and cynical glance of the Chief Equerry.

"Sir," said he, "you are aware that this matter cannot end here."

"It shall end where and when you please, my General," replied Blanc. "I am ready to support my words even in the King's presence."

"You know well enough what I mean. Name your second."

M. Blanc at once named a well-known gentleman of the company, and in a few moments a grim party of five, for the host was present, assembled in a secluded part of the picture gallery. Swords were procured and carefully measured, the distance was marked, and the seconds placed their men.

But, alas, it was soon apparent that the painter was no match for the bully. A few passes only were exchanged, and then M. Blanc sank heavily to the ground, and, murmuring "Ah, my picture!" expired.

"Adieu, gentlemen," said the other. "Let us hear no more of the King's margin, if you are wise."

JOHN H. ROGERS.

[*The above story can be vouched for as being perfectly true. The names of the characters have, for obvious reasons, been altered, but otherwise the incidents related are in strict accordance with actual facts. It may be of interest to add that the equerry had what he euphemistically described as the "King's Margin," and it will be in accordance with the reader's sense of justice that a terrible expiation awaited him later.*]

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My Fiancé's Glass Eye.

He was tall, dark, and, to my taste, altogether charming.

Last evening, for the first time, we walked in the winding pathway of the park; the straight avenue which stretched itself under the windows of the house had been until now the only witness to our confidences; I loved dearly this avenue, with its great oak trees placed at a regular distance apart, the benches for talking quite at one's ease, the green grass all around and beyond. When one wandered off a bit, the huge window panes, which seemed, by the light of the setting sun, great wide open eyes, all smiled at our happiness.

"Walk along the avenue with Monsieur de Valente, Angèle," my mother had said to me at the beginning of our engagement. "The pathways of the park are altogether too damp."

And I walked along the broad avenue, gently resisting Raoul (he was named Raoul), who appeared to have, I do not know why, a marked preference for the covered walks.

"Mamma says the narrow pathways with the overhanging shrubs are damp. Had we not better remain here?"

That evening, however, my head was turned, and something tugged at my heart-strings—he was to leave the next day to hunt up some papers necessary for our marriage.

Eight days without seeing him! How could I live! And he, taking advantage of my trouble, made me turn into the damp alley, which, by-the-way, in spite of its bad reputation, seemed to me as dry as possible.

"My Angèle, you are not going to forget me during these eight days?"

"Forget you! Ah!"

I would have lifted my hands to take Heaven as a witness that such a thing could never happen, if he had not held them tightly clasped in his own. It is not my habit to lose myself in sentimental protestations, my vivacity forbids it, and this time not more than at others did I play my nature false.

"Raoul, you love me, do you not? Well, then, I wish to tell you all my faults. I shall be more tranquil if you know them beforehand. You would see them sooner or later; so listen! I am very wilful. I will not yield to you; you may as well make up your mind to it. Then, I am quick as gunpowder. I stamp my foot, I scream, I even cry at times. Happily, all this passes quickly. Besides that, I am a coquette, like all women. You will not be jealous, I hope. And then, what else? I can't quite tell—a little gourmand at times, not wicked, not deceitful—I find nothing else. So much then for the moral side. As to the physical, what can I have wrong there? You must know that also. Ah! One of my finger-nails is not quite the same as the others; look! but it seems to me that isn't too ugly."

And, releasing my hand, I showed him a little pink nail, a little squarer than the others, a very innocent eccentricity of Nature. Raoul laughed, and wanted to kiss it, but I drew away my hand.

"I have also lost a wisdom-tooth, which is lost for ever, alas, so I can never be altogether wise. They took it out because it came too soon. Now, sir, it is your turn. Confess yourself."

Raoul, visibly embarrassed, remained silent.

"Go on. Have a bit of courage. You may be quite easy. I shall not scold. I do not know your faults, but it is quite certain you have some. In the first place, you are near-sighted, for you wear a monocle instead of an eye-glass, with which, it seems to me, you would see much better. Mamma says that glass causes you to make such fearful faces; but I don't think so. You please me as you are. However, take out the glass, so that I can see how you look when your face isn't crooked."

I had seized, with a little gentle pressure, the string of the monocle, when Raoul stopped my hand.

"No, my little Angèle, leave it there. Without it, I should no longer see you. I am near-sighted, very near-sighted, it is true; and I want to see you, Angèle, for you are the joy of my eyes."

Then, before even I had time to think, he had taken me, drawn me to him, and covered my eyes and my hair with kisses.

"Raoul, how naughty of you! enough of that—if you please."

"Why naughty? Are you not my *fiancée*, my darling little wife?"

"When I am your wife it will be quite different; let me go, I will not remain here, it is too dark under these trees."

I had succeeded in releasing myself and holding down my hair, which, under those soft kisses, was flying in all directions, as if charged with electricity. I escaped by running to the avenue. There was no longer any question of making Raoul confess; blushing violently, I was thinking of quite different matters.

The next day he was gone. What a frightful moment this departure when, standing on the front steps, I had turned away my head so as not to see Jean gather up the reins, the horses pull together, the victoria sway; in a word, so as not to see they were taking him away from me.

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Papa had gone with him to the station, while mamma and I breakfasted alone together. It was dismal in the extreme.

Mamma ate as usual, which I couldn't understand; as for myself, I ate only a very little, just enough to sustain me, and even that with difficulty. Every mouthful stuck in my throat.

In the midst of breakfast Justine opened the door.

"Madame, Monsieur de Valente has left his glass eye in his room. Shall it be sent to him?"

Had the heavens been opened to let fall on the table the sun and the moon, I couldn't have felt a greater shock. The end of the world will, perhaps, be nothing to equal it. I repeated with horror:

"His glass eye, Justine?"

"Yes, mademoiselle; it is on the washstand."

Mamma grew pale, but remained calm.

"Very well, Justine, you may leave the room. We will see if it is necessary to send it to him."

I had only two alternatives, either to faint away or to burst into convulsive sobs. I chose the latter.

"Mamma—mamma, he has a glass eye! Good Heavens, is it possible? How horrible! I shall never console myself! I shall die of grief!"

"Calm yourself, my child, calm yourself. It is ridiculous to put yourself in such a state. This gentleman has deceived us, that is all. I always thought he had rather a queer expression."

Mamma had risen, and I was sobbing on her breast.

"Why did he not tell me? I who avowed all my own defects—the nail, the wisdom-tooth, and the anger—all—everything! Dear me! how unhappy I am! And only last evening he had said: 'You are the joy of my eyes.' He should have said: 'You are the joy of my eye.' Ah, it is dreadful!"

"Come, quiet down; don't cry like that. I tell you it is ridiculous. Think no more about it, try to calm yourself. How unfortunate it is things have gone so far! Only eight days before the wedding, and everything ready! Well, it is a good thing we found it out in time."

I hardly listened. One question burned in my throat.

"He has another eye to change with, mamma, and this one, which he has used, is probably put in water to cool."

Mamma was horribly worried. "I knew nothing whatever about it," she said. "I have never known anyone intimately who had a glass eye, and do not care to know how they manage."

She continued a little monologue all to herself: "It *is* pleasant. All this trousseau, marked with a V. We never will find the same initial again; and your father will listen to no one else. He was charmed with this gentleman at first sight. The references were perfect; the Jesuit fathers, his colonel, and everyone. That is so like a man; one can never count on them. A pretty discovery, indeed! I always thought there was something extraordinary about him; the individual never pleased me, and I was quite right."

I had raised my head; the vision of the glass eye gazing at me from the depths of the wash-basin still troubled me profoundly. But another vision came also to my memory.

I saw again my *fiancé*, so good, so tender. I heard once again all our prospects for the future; all our plans made together; and, suddenly, it seemed to me to be last evening, and a rain of kisses was falling on my hair. I had not told mamma about these kisses; but I felt I loved Raoul with his one eye, and that nothing would induce me to give him up. All my courage came back to me.

"Mamma, I am sure he lost that eye in some honourable, magnificent way! It is a wound of which he should be proud; in saving someone, perhaps, from a fire; in sacrificing himself, it is certain—he is so good, he has such noble sentiments. I quite understand he would dislike confessing it."

"What do you say? Are you quite crazy? Do you think I am going to allow you to marry this man with such an infirmity? You, beautiful as you are, and only seventeen, and with your fortune, too? No, a thousand times no, my child; do not forge yourself a romance of devotion and sacrifice, it is perfectly useless. I will never consent to your marriage with a man with one eye. Should he lose the other, he would be quite blind, and how agreeable that would be!"

"But, mamma, I will be his faithful dog; I will lead him, I will take care of him, and will love him, in spite of his infirmity, in spite of everything which interferes to separate us!"

I was in an extraordinary state of exaltation. My sobs began again, harder than ever and did not promise to stop, when Justine re-entered the room, her honest face showing every expression of astonishment and stupefaction.

"It isn't possible that mademoiselle can put herself in such a state because M. de Valente has forgotten his eye; at all events he can buy another if he needs it before this evening, and he won't throw himself in the river because he hasn't that thing in his face."

And Justine showed me, hanging delicately at the end of her fingers, Raoul's monocle that I knew so well, with its round glass encircled with tortoiseshell, which seemed to me for the moment like a luminous halo. My emotion forbade my speaking. Mamma, however, went quickly towards Justine.

"Is that what you call a glass eye, Justine?"

"Certainly, madame; it seems to me that's the name for it. In any case it doesn't suit Monsieur Raoul, and mademoiselle would do well to give him spectacles when they are married; it is strange that men of the present day think it pretty to look with one eye—like that; it must be very difficult to keep it in place. I should never know how"—and Justine, with a comical grimace, stretching her mouth and turning up her nose, tried to introduce the monocle underneath her right eyebrow. I could contain myself no longer. My tears and sobs turned to idiotic laughter—I was so content! So happy!

It is now twenty-five years since all that happened.

Raoul has been an excellent husband—quite as unendurable as that order of individual always is. He has worn spectacles now for a long time, and when he wishes to see anything, looks with his two eyes. The monocle is buried in a drawer. I keep it as a relic of tears and laughter, and shall will it to my grandchildren if I should have any. My daughters are engaged and I have already told them that the pathways of the park are cold and damp in the evening! Each one has his turn in this world—life passes and very soon there will be nothing of our household but my *fiancé's* glass eye.

D. T. V.

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"A Tide in the Affairs."

Now that Philip Mannell is dead—in body only, for many generations will gratefully remember the name of one whose writings roused an enthusiasm which will be lasting—I will give the world a chapter of his life hitherto unwritten.

Like most men with or without an intellect above the average, being twenty-five or twenty-six, he was consumed with the firm conviction that he could make if not a mark in, yet a living out of letters, if only—and that "if only" sticks to most men—the necessary opportunity would come.

How many times have you and I in our spring days drawn up the skeleton of a plot, possible or impossible, to be torn up the next minute?

If possible, second thoughts made it too commonplace; if impossible, sufficient courage was lacking to trust it to the coldly cynical eye of an editor.

Mannell had the same wish—the same firm conviction, but the plots would not come.

Being without predilection for any particular practical calling, and being a person of rather more than average abilities and less than average foresight, he had become a schoolmaster.

For a year or two he had pursued his calling in London and was fast settling down into a feeling that, though he might be a success in his profession, the muse of literature would never condescend to befriend him, in spite of the strong feeling that he had missed his vocation.

He had rooms in Acton, and, of a nature loving solitude, lived, and took his recreations alone.

One evening he left his rooms in an aimless sort of manner, intending, as he often did, to enjoy a smoke either walking, or, if particularly lazy, on the useful 'bus.

He sauntered along, his thoughts busied with nothing in particular; then hailing a 'bus, which at this time of the evening, going citywards, was almost without occupant, he climbed to the top, refilled and relit his pipe, looked out his necessary change, and prepared—to do nothing. He had no direct intention, but let the 'bus take him where it would. The steady jog-trot and the clanking chains of the horses, with the fact that, the shops being closed for the most part, the way was not well lit, combined to bring a drowsy feeling over him.

Now and then the 'bus pulled up, and the "Benk, Benk" of the conductor, though not very energetic, would rouse him.

Half-way between Queen's Road and the Marble Arch, the 'bus again stopped.

Mannell was partly roused, though beyond noticing two men had hailed the driver he did not bestir himself.

"Only one on top. That's better than those two women inside."

Though this was said in an undertone, Mannell heard it. They came upstairs and sat down, with some little hesitation. Mannell was in a middle seat, and so the two men could not sit far from him. Dulled as his attention was, he felt that they regretted the presence of another.

This was interesting, but he little dreamt what he was in for.

The 'bus started again.

Carefully avoiding attracting their attention, Mannell took stock of his companions.

One man—evidently the elder—in a long overcoat and large soft felt hat, with his bushy eyebrows and heavy military moustache, had a distinct Slav appearance.

His comrade was a beardless youth, with sharp aquiline features and keen eyes.

After a low conversation of some minutes, Mannell's attention, which had flagged, was again called to them, by the younger exclaiming in a louder tone:

"It's not my fault. There were no cabs about. We had to come up here. We may as well remain, for he can't hear."

"Speak French, you fool," growled the other. "I expect he won't understand that. I'll make sure."

By this time, Mannell was outwardly asleep, and inwardly keenly alive. He felt thankful that he was a fairly good French linguist.

The elder man leant over and speaking in French said:

"Pardon me, sir, how far should I book for Charing Cross Road?"

Mannell looked up.

"I am sorry, sir. I don't understand. I am English."

"Nevare mind, sare. Please ze route to Sharing Cross Road to tell me."

Mannell told him and with voluble thanks the man resumed his seat.

After the conductor had taken his dues, their conversation began again—this time in French.

"What time does he expect us?" said the younger.

"Any time this evening!"

"Have you settled details? Are you reckoning that he will be landed here in London?"

"No! No! that would never do. Nowhere near London. The East Coast though, I expect."

"When shall we know?"

"Strazy says in the *Telegraph* the day after to-morrow."

"Why not to-night?"

"He won't know till to-morrow, and in the meantime he will arrange the other details with us. You and I will have to see it through, I expect. By the way, the government seems uneasy about the vessel as it is. I hope they won't delay much longer."

The 'bus stopped at the top of Shaftesbury Avenue, and the two got off and walked away in a southerly direction. Mannell assuring himself that they did not

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see him, followed at some little distance. He, however, was destined to lose them, though he noticed, as he expected, they did not make for Charing Cross Road, but turning off, made towards Wardour Street, and were soon lost in the intricacies of Soho. Mannell, after wandering about for some little time, made his way back to Oxford Street and home. He felt if he could spot that communication in the *Telegraph*, that he was on the track of something startling, though for the moment he could see no way of following it up.

* * * * *

Two days afterwards, on Friday, there appeared in the agony column of the *Telegraph* the following:

Apckmp, qyr, lglc, nk—qrpyxw.

This was the only notice that Mannell could connect with the incident on the 'bus, and for a long time being unprepared for cipher, he could think of nothing to help him.

After many essays, it suddenly struck him that the last word was probably a signature, and then he remembered "Strazy" was to be the informant.

Following this up he found the letters were two earlier than the actual and thus he made out:—

Cremor, Sat, nine p.m.—Strazy.

This was very plain and straightforward, and though now and then he was afraid he was finding a mare's nest or was interfering in some private business, the matter had some fascination for him. If it fizzled out, he at any rate had had a little excitement out of it.

Cremor is, we know, a comparatively small place on the East coast; and to this place, Saturday being a free day for him, Mannell went for the week end.

It was in the train going to his destination that Mannell came to the conclusion that the business he was engaged in was no unimportant one. Turning over the leaves of his daily paper, his attention was caught by a paragraph stating that the French Government and people were exercised at the delay of a vessel, which was bringing home for a re-trial, a man whose condemnation and transportation had caused a European sensation and who was believed by very many to be the victim of an appalling series of machinations on the part of those in authority.

The vessel had been due some days, and had been sighted two days before in the Channel.

Secrecy had to be exercised because of the ferment of public opinion, and therefore nothing more was known.

Here then was the discovery he was on the eve of.

It was too late for advice, in fact he was rather unwilling to seek it, for fear after all of a fiasco.

The day passed all too slowly for the latter, who, excited as he was, could find no interest in the popular seaside resort, and scarcely knew how to pass the time after making the few arrangements he thought necessary.

* * * * *

On the deck of a yacht of some 150 tons, steaming up the North Sea and keeping just out of sight of the coast stood three or four men. One was gazing apparently eagerly over the water. The others were evidently engaged in watching the first. The latter, some few days before, had been transferred to his present vessel from a French cruiser, and he was expecting to be landed somewhere on the French coast.

Suddenly a man in the bows evidently in command, having scanned the coastline which had just appeared through his glass for some minutes exclaimed:

"Here is our destination at last."

These words acted as a signal and almost before they were finished, the three men had closed round the fourth, and in a few moments, he was gagged, bound, and thrust into a long chest not much larger than a coffin, but with ventilation for breathing purposes. As a further precaution a dose of chloroform was administered to the victim in order to keep him silent till he was safely landed and concealed.

* * * * *

When the two men whom Mannell had overheard on the 'bus, after sighting the yacht, sauntered down to the beach and ordered a boat, they might have been suspicious at the alacrity with which it was ready and manned; and they would have been still more averse to the little excursion if they had known that at least one fisherman was new to the calling, being a schoolmaster by profession, and that all were secretly armed, more prepared for boarding a pirate than for fetching ashore some luggage from the yacht which has scarcely had time to drop anchor.

The luggage consisted almost solely of a long chest of heavy weight.

Mannell's uncertainty about the whole business, led him to devote all his energies to securing the chest, and he neglected the vessel almost completely. He realised his mistake later.

The conspirators were too much engaged with the apparent success of the undertaking to scent failure now.

As the boat grounded Mannell jumped ashore first.

When the chest was landed, the elder of the conspirators speaking fairly good English, asked for help to carry the chest to a spot above the beach where a trap was to be ready to take it—to be examined if necessary.

Then Mannell stepped forward.

"One minute, please. We will examine it here."

Whether the question was so unexpected, or whether the air of the fishermen was threatening the two men at once turned and ran but they were quickly secured and detained while Mannell opened the chest and discovered its gagged occupant, more dead than alive.

As Mannell had guessed, the occupant of the chest was none other than the man who was the centre of Europe's interest.

Communication was made with London and the victim and his captors were sent to France, and thanks to judicious expenditure of hush money the matter never became public property.

It was surmised that Strazy, a name which concealed the identity of a high-placed French official wished to secure the man, and to force him to sign a statement that he was guilty of the crime with which he was charged or of some other equally serious offence.

Mannell received a suitable acknowledgement from the two governments, for the part he had played in the affair, but his greatest gain was more lasting.

His first and perhaps his greatest work was founded on the incident, and thus he laid the foundation of a fame which, though he is dead, is still undimmed.

S. B.

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How I Played Providence to Richard Stanley.

"How I came to be staying at Fairleigh Court at the time of the exposure of Lionel Vernon, its owner, doesn't matter," said Fred Massey. "There I was, and there I remained a spectator, if not an actor, in one of the strangest dramas that ever was enacted. You remember Dick Stanley, don't you?" he asked us, barely waiting for the unanimous refrain of "Rather" before he continued, "As nice a fellow as one could wish to meet. Shall I spin you the yarn?" with a sudden access of difference extremely amusing.

"You'll explode if we stop you," laughed Fairfax, "we all know your weakness, Massey, so fire away."

And nothing loth Massey obeyed.

"A charming host, a perfectly ordered establishment, the companionship of my favourite chum, what could be the matter with me that, try as I would, I was not able to shake off the feeling of depression that hung over me from the hour I arrived at Fairleigh Court?

"I felt positively nervous as the prospect of an introduction to Dick's *fiancée*, the beautiful Esmé Vernon, and when I tried to congratulate dear old Dick himself on his approaching marriage I found myself faltering out the merest common-places and platitudes.

"However, I put it down to brain fag and trusted that after a while my normal health and spirits would reassert themselves.

"I did not meet Miss Vernon at dinner, 'a headache,' her brother Lionel explained, prevented her joining us, much I regret to say to my satisfaction. In the course of the evening Dick announced he had some letters he was bound to get off. Our host was summoned to a consultation with the farm-bailiff and, perforce, I was left to my own devices.

"'Have a look at the pictures in the north gallery, old chap,' said Dick, 'there are one or two well worth your attention. Besides,' and he flushed a little, 'I want your opinion on Esmè's portrait. It was painted some years ago now—in fact, when she was but seventeen. She was always lovely,' he added, musing, 'but even I hardly realised what a beautiful woman my darling would have grown.

"''Tis a long time for a woman to wait—seven years—isn't it, Fred? And yet my dear girl has waited just so long for me. More, she had not even the consolation of letters, for correspondence between us was forbidden. I was anything but prosperous, as you know, when I left England, and Lionel declined to sanction our engagement. I don't blame him, though between ourselves I think he's a bit hard. But now Fortune's turned. I 'struck 'ile," as the Yankees say, out in California, or rather stumbled on a gold mine, and so there is nothing between me and happiness which,' he added with a bright smile, 'being interpreted signifies Esmé.'

"Fairleigh Court was by no means an ancestral mansion. It was a large commodious modern house, well-built, artistically decorated and filled with all the newest improvements.

"Lionel Vernon was by way of being an artist, and the north gallery was fitted up very much in the fashion of a studio. There were, as Dick had said, several pictures well worth one's attention, but although I was tempted to linger over an exquisite face after Romney, curiosity induced me to look for Miss Vernon's portrait. Instinctively I made my way towards a large oil-painting, at the extreme end of the gallery. It represented a young and exquisitely lovely girl of about seventeen. Lovely it was in very truth but mournful beyond expression. In the large wide eyes—of dark-brown, there lay a shadow. The perfect lips formed for laughter drooped in sad curves. It was a face to haunt one, a face—I started. Of whom did it remind me? Memory conjured up a fleeting vision of a tall slight form, a wealth of golden hair, eyes brimful of happiness. How like, and yet how cruelly unlike the face before me; and then the recollection faded, and I was no nearer discovering who it was that Esmé Vernon's portrait so curiously recalled to me.

"Somehow the sadness of the pictured face affected me. I found myself pitying the girl, feeling that life had some sad fate in store for her. I remember even as the thought flashed through my mind how indignantly I dismissed it. What more could any girl want from fate than a husband like Dick Stanley? How Dick would stare if he knew the length to which imagination had carried me.

"I laughed at the idea and turned to leave the gallery, my hand was on the door, when a strange sound broke the silence. I turned, my blood tingling and a queer sensation at my heart. Once again it echoed through the gallery, and I shivered as I listened. Ay, shivered, for it was the echo of a mad woman's laugh. I glanced round apprehensively. Nobody was to be seen. After a while I was ready to persuade myself that my wretched nerves had played a trick, and that I had heard nothing more dreadful than the wind rustling among the poplars. I shut the door again, and walked boldly up the gallery. All was unchanged, no sign or trace of anything or anybody. I remained sceptical until I reached Miss Vernon's portrait, The face looked sadder than ever and I felt strangely stirred as I gazed.

"Suddenly I saw the drapery upon the gallery wall move, and a small white hand drew back a heavy *portière*. Fascinated, I watched a pale, thin face look out at me—watched till the face was burnt into my brain. The shadow lurking in the eyes of the pictured beauty had become a dread reality. The original of Esmé Vernon's portrait stood before me, madness written in her every line and movement.

"Even as I looked, the figure, with a weird unnatural laugh, vanished, and search as I might no trace of her remained.

"The shock which the awful vision gave me, left me deep in meditation from which I was aroused by Dick himself.

"'Why, old chap,' he said, 'have you fallen asleep or what? I've spoken to you three times already. Here's Esmé come to see my best and dearest friend. Why, Fred——'

"Shaking off his hand I gazed in utter stupefaction

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at the girl beside him. Tall, fair—I glanced from her back again to the portrait. Ah, no, there was no shadow in her eyes, no hint of a fate too sad, to pitiful to think of. But who, who could she be?

"And then, by one of those strange freaks of fancy, brain waves—call them what you will—the studio faded, and I seemed to stand in an old-fashioned garden. A tall grey-haired man hastened to welcome me and by his side a fair young girl.

"'It's Mavis,' I cried, 'Mavis Grey.'

"Stanley gazed at me in astonishment.

"'What does he mean, Dick?' cried his *fiancée*. 'How dare he so insult me?'

"The words recalled me to the present position of affairs.

"'Your resemblance to the daughter of an old friend for the moment quite startled me, Miss Vernon,' I explained. 'I can never apologise sufficiently for my clumsiness in speaking so abruptly.'

"She listened to my explanation, and appeared quite satisfied, and Dick took no further notice of the incident, but for the rest of the evening I was conscious that Lionel Vernon was regarding me in a catlike fashion from under his eyelids.

"'I hope you'll sleep well,' said he as I wished him good-night. 'Only don't let your exuberant imagination get the better of your common sense, else you'll be seeing or hearing something else peculiar!'

"'Hardly,' I returned. 'I expect you keep your chamber of horrors locked at night.'

"For a second his eyes dropped, then staring me full in the face he laughed:

"'You mean the gallery?' he asked. 'Hardly a compliment to my sister or her portrait.'

"The man was beyond me. I could no more fathom him than I could explain what had occurred that afternoon. His sister Esmé was undoubtedly insane. What motive could he have in concealing her and substituting another woman in her stead? For that the woman who had been introduced to me as Dick's *fiancée* was Mavis Grey I was convinced.

"A mystery there undoubtedly was; how could I solve it?

"And by one of those strange turns of fortune chance put the clue into my hands.

"I was too much agitated by the strange events of the day to feel able to compose myself for sleep. I paced the room with nervous energy forming first this and then that conclusion. At last nature reasserted itself. I found myself yawning, I grew drowsy, and finally threw myself dressed as I was upon the bed.

"I woke that night with a start to find my hands icy cold and my heart beating at express speed. Something had startled me, but before I had time for conjecture I heard a sound as of a woman weeping. In an instant I remembered that my room was on the same floor as the North Gallery and as quickly I decided that the sounds issued from there. Intensely excited, but with my nerves well in hand I groped my way as quietly as possible down the dim corridor until I stood a few feet from the entrance to the picture gallery.

Fascinated, I watched a pale, thin face look out at me.

"I glanced into the room, and at the sight which met my eyes I had difficulty in repressing an exclamation of horror.

"Lionel Vernon was bending over Dick's *fiancée*, who with every appearance of terror and dismay, was striving to shake off his restraining hand.

"'You to defy me, to say what you will, and what you will not do! Another word, and I will crush you utterly, destroy for ever the love you boast of. Do you suppose Dick Stanley will continue to love you when he knows the truth?'

"'The truth!' she echoed scornfully. 'Tis you, not I, who should fear that. I have but to tell my tale to Dick, and he will love, will pity and forgive!'

"Lionel smiled in that smooth, evil sort of fashion that I had always hated.

"'What have I to fear?' she went on passionately. 'The fault, if any, will be laid to your charge. You told me that Dick Stanley was engaged years back to your sister Esmé, and after years of weary waiting at last he returned to England a wealthy man. You told me that if he had learnt the girl he loved was dead, he would go mad or die of grief.'

"'Yes,' said the man quietly, 'and then?'

"'You begged me for his sake, the sake of the man your dear dead sister had adored, to personate her. You said I was her living image, and that no one could detect I was not she.'

"'And then?'

"'I did so, and—and, Dick never knew. But now,' and her voice took a note of exultation, 'now Dick loves me for myself, not for the sake of that other woman, and when I tell him all, he will but love me the more. It isn't possible,' she went on, 'that I could marry him with such a lie upon my lips. Besides why should you wish it? Even if I consented, it would be no good; sooner or later I should be discovered. You see that man this afternoon remembered me. Others also know

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me as Mavis Grey. I cannot marry him with such a lie upon my lips,' she cried once more.

"'It will be that or nothing,' said Lionel savagely.

"'You mistake,' she answered eagerly, 'he will surely forgive, because he loves me so.'

"'You are leaving me out of the question, I fancy,' interrupted the man. 'Your tale sounds pretty and interesting, I grant you. As to whether it will bear inspection or not, that is another matter. If you remember, you first met Stanley at my house in Bayswater; he entered the room, where you were alone, greeted you as the woman he loved—and you replied as that woman.'

"'Well?'

"'Not well at all,' he answered with a mocking little laugh, 'listen to my version of the affair and you will agree with me. First I met you at the house of an artist to whom you sat, as afterwards you did to me.'

"'What if I did?' she broke out fiercely. 'I was poor and glad to earn my living—no matter how, so long as it was honest.'

"The other shrugged his shoulders and continued:

"'As a model you came to me, and in the course of conversation you learnt the history of my dead sister's engagement to Dick Stanley. You also remarked on your extraordinary likeness to her. One day Dick Stanley returns; taking advantage of my absence you throw yourself into his arms, and he, mistaking you for Esmé, is only too glad. I am horrified at the deception you have practised, but partly out of sorrow for Dick, partly out of the weakness a man always shows when a pretty woman is in question, I did not unmask you. But at last my conscience would not let me countenance the fraud. Say,' he added, with a scornful laugh, 'shall I give your lover my version?'

"'He cannot believe what you say,' she panted.

"Vernon broke into a peal of mocking laughter.

"'What, believe your word, the word of an adventuress, against mine. Try, and see what the result will be.'

"She moaned, clasping her hands like one distraught.

"'What shall I do? What shall I do?' she cried.

"'Be sensible, hold your tongue. Marry him and say nothing.'

"'But——'

"'I have my reasons for wishing it,' he said, with that soft slow smile of his. 'What they are do not concern you. You will have a home, a loving husband, wealth and happiness.'

"'At the cost of truth, of honour. Oh, what will it all profit me when the price I must pay—is my soul.'

"'Folly,' he sneered, 'you are nervous and excited. A good night's rest is what you want, my dear. Things will appear very different in the morning.'

"But she could only answer with her sobs, until out of patience the man took her arm and led her from the gallery—passing, greatly to my comfort, through the other door.

"In the library next morning I noticed a small packet of papers on Mr. Vernon's writing-table, and the idea suggesting itself that amongst them I might find something connected with the strange conspiracy, I felt no compunction in going through them. At present the motive for Vernon's conduct was lacking, and it must be, I reasoned, a strong motive to induce him to embark on so perilous an undertaking.

"He greeted you as the woman he loved."

"My expectations were fulfilled. Among the papers was a deed by which Stanley settled £30,000 on Esmé Vernon, his future wife, with power to will it as she chose.

"The whole vile plot stood revealed. In a flash I understood the villain's purpose. He intended Mavis Grey to impersonate his sister Esmé right up to the hour of the wedding. But at the ceremony the poor mad girl herself was to appear. After—well, no one could see the fragile figure and believe she would live longer than a year. And in the event of her death Lionel would doubtless take care that he should profit.

"As I stood, the paper in my hand, someone grasped me by the arm.

"'Good Heaven, Dick,' I cried.

"'What are you doing,' said my friend sternly, pointing to the papers. 'What does this mean?'

"But I could only stammer, 'Dick,' I began, 'Dick—'

"'DICK.'

"A low voice echoed the name, the heavy curtains at the window parted and a tall slight form advanced.

"I recognised her as the real Esmé Vernon, the

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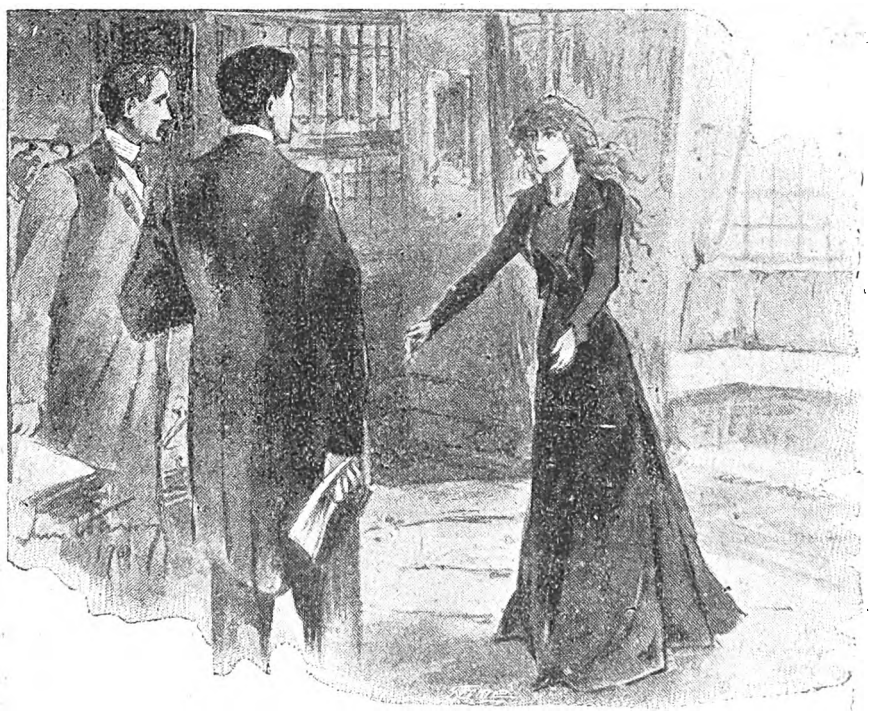

"With outstretched hands she came towards us."

woman I had seen the previous afternoon; with outstretched hands she came towards us.

"'Don't you know me,' she said in a hoarse, strained voice. 'Don't you know me?'

"'My God,' said Dick,; 'what does it mean?'

"For a moment he stood speechless, unable to move or stir, until a piercing scream roused him, as it were, to life.

"All unperceived, Mavis Grey had entered, and at the sight of the woman whom she so closely resembled, whose eyes were hers, whose mouth seemed to wear the self-same smile—at the sight, I say, she staggered, tottered, and fell.

"And the tall, slight figure in black came closer to where Dick stood, helpless and aghast.

"'Darling,' said a voice—her voice—and I noticed how exquisitely sweet and tender were her tones, 'darling, I'm glad you've come at last because I'm very tired.'

"Something, I know not what, made Stanley, dazed and bewildered as he was, respond to the appeal. He gathered the slight figure in his arms, and kissed the lips that clung so loving to his. A look of infinite happiness stole over her features, and then——

"'Fred,' said he hoarsely, 'come, look here.'

"And with a great fear at my heart I looked.

"Esmé lay dead in Dick's arms.

* * *

"For his sister's sake, Stanley let Vernon go unharmed, but the man's villainy was even greater than we suspected. From various sources we gathered that the poor dead girl, never very strong, had been subjected to a course of persecution by her brother, who was desirous of marrying her to an old reprobate whose sins were as numerous as his income was large.

"Finding threats and persuations were useless he, hoping to secure her adherence to his schemes by these means, had told her that Stanley had married another woman, with the result that the girl's nervous organization broke down completely, and she became a victim to melancholia. The disease made frightful inroads upon her constitution, and her heart was much affected, while her mental condition became such that marriage was out of the question.

"Vernon, desperate for money, had conceived the idea of making Mavis Grey impersonate his sister on Dick's return home, meaning as I have said to produce the real Esmé at the wedding. Once married he had little fear of Dick's disputing the settlement—mad or not mad she would be his wife. And in a short time Esmé would die, and he, Lionel, would, as her legatee, be in possession of £30,000.

"The sound of her lover's voice had for a moment recalled the poor girl's reason, and I like to think that—if only for a moment—she tasted happiness before she died.

"And Mavis?

"Well, as I say, I always thought her more sinned against than sinning, and by her suffering she fully expiated her deceit. For a long time she lay between life and death, and when at last she recovered, it was to find her lover broken in health and spirits, a wreck of his old self.

"But time cured their wounds as it cures most others, and the year after Esmé's death they married, and I can truly say are happy."

JOHN K. PROTHERO.

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AN UNANSWERED PRAYER.

It was a wild, stormy night, but the Rev. John Benham —rector of the Devon fishing village of Upmouth—gave little heed to it, as he sat in his study preparing his sermon for the following Sunday. He was over fifty, and looked it, by reason of his grey hair and stooping shoulders, but his features were fine and clear-cut, and his expression gentle and sympathetic, coupled with the far-away look of the deep thinker and profound scholar.

There was a knock at the door, and in answer to his "come in," his wife entered the room. She was a young and beautiful woman, whom the rector had married only two years before, and though he lived somewhat in the clouds, his love for his wife was very real.

He adored her as a precious gift sent to be the comfort and the delight of his old age. Truly, he knew little of her past life—only what she had told him —but that little was enough for his simple and unsuspicious nature. He trusted her implicitly.

Though only twenty-six when he first knew her, she was already a widow. Her husband had ill-treated her, and then deserted her, leaving her utterly destitute, and his death had caused her no grief. With her rich colouring, sunny hair, and lovely blue eyes, she made a bright picture in the dull, almost gloomy study.

"Oh! John," she exclaimed, seating herself unceremoniously on the arm of the rector's chair, "isn't it a dreadful night? James has just come back from the village, and he says there is great excitement down there, as there is a large ship going to wreck just off the rocks, right in sight of the people. The fishermen are doing all that they can with the boats, and James says they hope to save them all. I sent him back with some brandy, as it might prove useful."

"That's right, my darling, always so thoughtful," the rector replied fondly. "How dreadful these storms are, I hope no lives will be lost. Do you think I had better go down to the beach?"

"No, dear," she replied almost smilingly. "What good could you do? You know our brave fishermen will do all that can be done, and I told James to tell them to bring any injured person here. Was I right?"

"Quite right, dear, it is the least we can do, except pray."

"Oh! John, how wonderfully good you are!" she exclaimed, stroking his grey hair caressingly, "I verily believe you are the best man living. It is difficult to conceive there are so many bad men in this world, with you so good."

She meant what she said. To her he seemed something of a visionary and idealist, but always the best man in the world, and her love for him knew no limit.

"It is force of contrast," she assured herself. "If I am not bad myself—and I am not at all sure about that —I have known so much badness in my chequered life, and he is so good."

His wife's praise was sweet to him, but the rector was too modest to accept it without mild remonstrance.

"My dear, I am not good, not half so good as I ought to be," he protested gently, "and you know you may be good, too, if you wish, if you will."

She took his head in both her hands, and gazed deep down into his eyes.

"Dear, dear John, how I love you!" she said, in a tender whisper. "You are good enough for both. I am quite content to stand in the light of your reflected glory. But I must go, I hear a noise in the hall," and with a loving glance, she sped away.

The rector sighed. How beautiful and charming she was! Every day his love for her grew; but she was not entirely one with him. They were not yet one in thought and spirit. The great truths which were of such vital importance to him, were mere names to her. But he did not despair, he would go on hoping, and praying, and fervent prayer was always answered, he firmly believed.

In the hall Mrs. Benham found the servants gathered round a prostrate figure which two stalwart fisherman had just brought in.

"You told us to bring 'em here, mum," said one, pulling his forelock to the rector's wife, "and as he seems the only one much hurt, we brought 'im; he be dying, I think."

"Oh! poor man, I am so sorry, what can we do for him," she replied, bending over the injured man, and then the pallor of death came over her face, and a great horror shone in her eyes, as she uttered a slight exclamation.

The man opened his eyes, and for one brief moment gazed full at her, then wearily closed them again, feebly muttering to himself.

"I fear he is very badly injured," Mrs. Benham said, rising to her feet, and looking around with a strange expression.

"Mary, see that he is taken to the spare bedroom, and send for Dr. Jones at once. I will go and acquaint your master."

"She be that tender-hearted, she be," whispered one rough fisherman to the other, "did you see how white she went when she looked at him?"

"Ay, she be as good as she is luv'ly," the other returned cordially.

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The rector was startled when he saw his wife.

"Nellie, you have allowed this to upset you," he said, when he had heard the story of the unfortunate man.

"It has been too much for you, sit here in my chair, while I go and have a look at him."

Dr. Jones had examined his unknown patient, and had done all that was possible, but he shook his head gravely as the rector entered.

"I am afraid your services are more needed here than mine," he observed. "I don't think he will live, he is injured internally, as well as a broken leg. He looks a decent fellow, but I fancy has roughed it a good deal."

The rector's grey eyes were full of deep compassion, as he leaned over the man.

"My friend, can you hear? Is there anything you would like to say?" he asked in the gent'est tone. The man regarded him steadily for a moment and then said in a weak but eager voice:

"My wife! where is she? I saw her here, bring her to me."

"Poor fellow, so you have a wife," the rector replied feelingly. "But I think his mind is wandering," he added in an aside to the doctor, who answered with decision:

"Undoubtedly. You must be very quiet for a while," he continued turning to the sufferer. "We will talk about your wife later on," and he drew the rector from the room, adding: "He may live a day or two, perhaps longer; he is a man of splendid physique."

Mrs. Benham awaited her husband's return with feverish anxiety, pacing the study in an agony of fear and apprehension. But one look at his face was enough; as yet, he knew nothing.

"Oh! how long you have been," she cried, going close up to him, and speaking rapidly. "What did he say? Did he speak? Is he better?"

How truly kind and sympathetic she was! Anxiety for this stranger had quite excited her.

"Jones says he has little hope of his recovery, but that he may live for some days. He is slightly delirious, and talked of his wife; he saw her here, he says."

"Oh!" she gasped, clasping her hands together tightly, "what a strange idea. It must have been one of the servants he imagined to be his wife. I must go now and speak to cook. You must stay here and try and finish your sermon, you have been interrupted enough for one night."

But she did not seek the cook. She went swiftly and silently up the stairs to the room where the injured man lay, and locking the door behind her, stood staring down at him, as if unable to speak.

"Nellie," the man muttered, raising himself, "I knew you would come. I knew you were here; but how did you get here?"

"How did *you* get here?" she replied, in a low tone of suppressed excitement. "You who left me five years ago, you who died in South Africa? Explain quickly."

"It was all a mistake," he answered, turning his eyes away from her as he spoke. "I had a dreadful fever, and was unconscious for some time, and they thought I was dead, and wrote and told you so, and when I recovered I did not write and contradict it, as perhaps I should have done; but I was going to London to seek for you—a rich man, Nellie, but all my wealth has gone down in that accursed ship, and here I am in a strange house, without a penny. We'll have to begin all over again—you and I—when I get better. I swear I'll never be unkind to you again, as I was in the past. I must have been mad then, as I always loved you, and love you now."

"Hush!" she exclaimed, holding up her hand with an imperious gesture. "Don't speak of love, such men as you don't know the meaning of the word. I wished never to see you again. I would that you had gone down in that ill-fated vessel, for I am the wife of the clergyman you saw just now, and I love him with all my heart as I never loved you."

The man stared at her in surprise too great for words, and then stammered out:

"But what—how did it come about? I left you in London."

"Yes, to starve. Fortunately I had friends who got me a situation here, as a companion-housekeeper, and the rector of the parish married me, that is all."

"What a dreadful thing!" he replied. "I have a prior right to you though, you'll have to come with me, so you had better do it quietly, without any fuss. It's a clear case of bigamy, you know, what would your holy parson say to that?"

"Don't!" she cried fiercely, "don't refer to him in any way. You are not worthy to touch even the hem of his coat, such men as you and he are as far apart as the poles, you could never understand him. But he must never know, he loves me, and the disgrace would kill him. I shall never go with you," she added triumphantly. "You will never leave here until you are taken away, the doctor says. You will die, die before this week is out."

The man's face grew whiter than it had been before, and he stared at her in a dazed manner, as if trying to take in the meaning of her harsh cruel words.

"And you tell me this in that brutal way," he said at length. "Die! I, who was so full of life and hope, but yesterday! I, who am only thirty-four! Have you no pity, Nellie?"

"Yes, the same that you had for me when you left me alone in London, wretched and penniless," she replied, in clear cutting tones. "If my husband is holy, remember, I am not."

He sighed, and moved restlessly, murmuring:

"It is my own fault, I deserve it Nellie, if I die as you say I must, die without confessing anything, will you forgive me? Will my death atone for my sins?"

"Yes, I will forgive you, will try to think kindly of you even, but you must not live. He must not, shall not suffer. For his sake I would do anything, for his sake you must die."

And wearied with pain, and bereft of hope, with no desire to live—in the early hours of the next morning he died.

When it was all over, the anxiety and strain at an end, she threw herself into the rector's arms, and wept as though her heart would break, and he soothed and comforted her, as only he could. A few days later he took her to Italy. She needed a change of scene and air, after the sad event which had so tried and upset her delicate, highly strung nerves; and in Italy he discovered what a creature of whims and quaint ideas she was. Coming suddenly one morning upon a tiny Roman Catholic chapel, almost hidden in a nest of trees, she gazed enraptured at it.

"I should so like to be married in just such a dear little church," she exclaimed. "Oh John! may we? do say yes."

"But my darling, how can that be, when we are already married?" he answered in surprise.

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"I know," she replied earnestly, "but I was brought up in the Roman Catholic faith, and somehow I cannot quite shake off its superstitions, and our marriage seems to me hardly any marriage at all, because it was performed only in a Protestant Church. Let us be married over again, and I shall be perfectly happy and satisfied. And after all it cannot matter, I shall be doubly yours then, and the tie can never be too close that unites me to you."

How could he refuse her when she spoke like this? And if she really had a scruple about the validity of their marriage why not humour her? It only meant procuring a license and witness; and so never for one moment imagining her real secret motive he consented, and they were married.

It was a lovely sunny day—the day of their marriage, and their hearts were atune with it.

"How inscrutable are the ways of Providence," the rector observed, looking at his wife's radiant face, "that we should be so happy, and others so unhappy. That poor fellow who died at our house, for instance—I hoped that he would live, and be restored to the wife he spoke of; I prayed so fervently tha the might, but it was not to be, my prayer was unanswered."

She looked at him long before replying, as if in deep meditation, then she said seriously:

"Do you remember once telling me that if our prayers were unanswered it was all for the best, for our good that it was so? Perhaps it was so in this case. Perhaps it was best for his wife, best for all concerned, that he should die. If you can understand what I mean perhaps God answered your prayer by not answering it."

"Perhaps so," her husband asserted thoughtfully. He was delighted that she should talk in this manner At last she took an interest in these matters. She was beginning to be "good." VERA BROWNING.

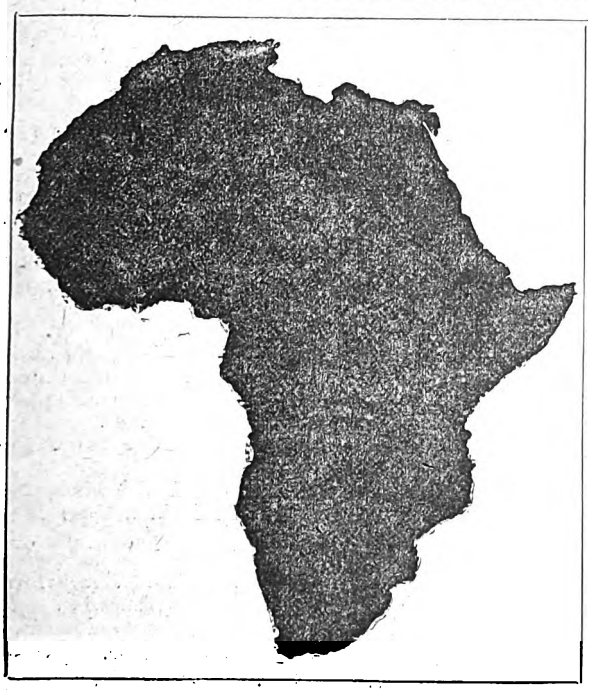
RESULT OF THE "TWO WIRE STITCHES" COMPETITION.

THIS competition was taken up by many readers, and most of the articles sent were very well made. Several competitors seem to have had a difficulty in making the wire bend, but if they had heated it it would have been much more pliable.

Some of the articles which were most carefully finished off are reproduced above.

The sender of the best made article is **F. Moore, 11 Lorne Street Fairfield, Liverpool,** to whom I am sending the first prize of One Guinea.

The next best, to each of whom one of our stereoscopes is being sent, are: P. A. Smith, 1 Crosby Villas, Dyson's Lane, Upper Edmonton, N.; H. Frisby, 17 Dover Buildings, Old Kent Road, S.E.; S. W. Baker, 1A Calverley Road, Eastbourne; W. Benwell, 1 Ernest Place, Whitehead Road, Aston; C. Whybourne, 1 The Pavement, New Malden, Surrey; G. Dowman, 150 St. James Road, Tunbridge Wells; G. Heitzmann, 29 Noel Street, Islington, N.; H. Horn, 211 Blackfriars Road, S.E.



"SHORT STORIES" SILHOUETTE COMPETITION

THIS competition seems to have been very popular, no doubt on account of it being such an easy one.

When properly pasted up, the pieces assume the shape of the

"DARK CONTINENT,"

of which we give a reduction.

The entries were very numerous, and the result is that 224 of our readers sent in correct solutions.

It would be ridiculous to attempt to share the first prize of £5 among the winners, as it would not average sixpence each, so I have sent one of Pearson's stereoscopes to each of the 224 correct competitors.

IF YOU CAN'T DRAW PICTURES,

the probabilities are that you can make a clever illustration by cutting out pieces from different sketches and making a good picture by pasting them together.

We will give £2 2s., £1 1s., twenty-five stereoscopes, and ten silver-plated pencil-cases for the best pictures we receive made up entirely of illustrations which appear in

PASTIMES

during the first three weeks in February, dated February 3rd, 10th, and 17th.

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I SAT spinning at my little wheel in the sun, for the autumn day was cold, when I heard some one whistling, and, looking up, there was young Squire Turner, with his arms folded on the gate, looking towards me. When he caught my eye he laughed. I blushed, and made him a courtesy.

He was a handsome gentleman, the squire, and he was bonny to look at with his hair like spun gold in the October sunlight.

When I courtesied he bowed, and, said he:

"I've spoiled one pretty picture that I could have looked at all day, but I've made another as pretty, so I'll not grieve. May I come in?"

"And welcome, sir," said I, and I set a chair, for he was grandfather's landlord; but for all that I felt uncomfortable, for I was not used to fine company.

He talked away, paying me more compliments than I was used to, for grandmother, who brought me up, said:

"Handsome is as handsome does," and "Beauty is but skin deep."

Since I'm telling the story, I'll tell the truth. I had done wrong about one thing.

Neither of the old folks knew that I wore Evan Locke's ring in my bosom, or that we'd taken a vow to each other beside the hawthorn that grew in the church lane. I never meant to deceive, but grannie was old and a little hard, and that love of mine was such a sweet secret.

Besides, money seems to outweigh all else when people have struggled all their lives through to turn a penny, and they knew that Evan was a poor, struggling young surgeon.

I thought I'd wait a while until I could sweeten the news with the fact that he'd begun to make his fortune.

Grannie came in from the dairy five minutes after the squire was gone and heard he had been there. I didn't tell her of his fine speeches, but there was a keyhole to the door she came through and I have a guess she heard them.

That night we had something else to think of.

Misfortunes had come upon grandfather; but I didn't foresee that when the half year's rent should come due not a penny to pay it with would be found.

All this time Evan Locke and I had been as fond as ever of each other, and he came as often as before to talk with grandpa on the winter nights; and still every little while our young landlord, Squire Turner, would drop in and sit in his lazy way and watch me knit or spin.

Once or twice he was flushed with wine and over bold, for he tried to kiss me. But squire or no, I boxed his ears for his pains, and no softer than I could help either.

I could not help his coming, nor help seeing him when he came, and I did not deserve that Evan should be angry with me.

But he was. Eh, so high and mighty, and spoke as high as though one like the squire could mean no good by coming to so poor a place as the schoolmaster's.

He made me angry and I spoke up.

"For that matter the squire would be glad to have me promise to marry him," said I. "He thinks more of me than——"

"May be you like him better!" said Evan,

"I don't say that," replied I. "But bad temper and jealousy scarce ever make me fond of another. I pray I may never have a husband who will scold me."

For he had been scolding me. No other name for it.

Well, Evan was wroth with me and I with him—not heart deep, though, I thought—and I did not see him for more than a week.

I was troubled much, though, I knew he would come round again, and mayhap ask my pardon. For before you are wed you can bring your lover to his senses.

So I did not fret after Evan's absence, nor quite snub Squire Turner, who liked me more than ever. But one night grandfather came in, and shutting the door

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stood between grandmamma and me, looking at me, and so strangely that we both grew frightened.

At last he spoke:

"I've been to the squire's," said he. "For the first time I had to tell him that I could not pay the rent when due."

I opened my lips. Grandmamma's hand covered them. Grandpa drew me to him.

"Thou'rt young, lass," said he, "and they are right who call thee pretty. Child—couldst like the squire well enough to wed him?"

"Eh?" cried grandma. "Sure you're not wandering?"

"Squire Turner asked me for this lass of ours to-night. Of all women in the world there is but one he loves as he should his wife, and that is our Agatha."

"I dreamt of golden rings and white roses on Christmas eve," cried Grannie. "I knew the lass would be lucky."

But I put my head on grandfather's shoulder and hid my face.

The truth must come out, I knew.

"Wilt have him and be a rich lady?" said grandpa.

And when he had waited for an answer I burst out with "No," and a sob together.

"She's frightened," said grandmamma. "Nay, we must all wed once in our lives, my child."

I sat spinning at my little wheel, in the sun, when I heard someone whistling, and, looking up, there was young Squire Turner, with his arms folded on the gate, looking towards me.

Then grandpa talked to me.

He told me how poor they had grown, and how kind the squire was, and I had but to marry him to make my grandparents free from debt and poverty all their lives through.

If I refused and vexed the squire heaven only knew what might happen.

"She'll never ruin us," sobbed grandmamma.

Ah! it was hard to bear—bitterly hard; but now there was no help for it, I took the ring from my bosom and laid it on my palm, and told them it was Evan Locke's and that I had plighted my troth to him.

And grandmamma called me a deceitful wench, and grandfather looked as if his heart would break.

Oh, I would have done anything for them but give up my true love.

That night I kissed his ring and prayed heaven that he might love me always. In the morning it was gone, ribbon and all, from my neck.

I looked for it high and low, but found no sign of it. And I began to fear the loss of that dear ring was a sign that I would never marry Evan Locke.

The days passed on, and he never came near me.

"Oh, it was cruel in him," I thought, "to hold such anger for a hasty work he had provoked, when I spoke it that he must know I loved him so."

And grandma would scarcely look at me (I know why now), and grandpa sighed and moaned and talked of being turned out of his home. And I thought I should die of grief among them.

One day grandma said to me:

"It seems that your sweetheart is not over fond of you, nor over anxious to see you."

"Why not?" said I.

"Where has he been this month back?" asked grandma.

"Busy, doubtless," said I, with a smile, though I thought my heart would burst.

"You're going with him, maybe."

"Where?" said I.

She went to the kitchen door and beckoned in a woman who sat there—Dame Coombs, who had come over with eggs.

"I heard you rightly," she said. "You told me Evan Locke and his mother were making ready for a voyage."

"They're going to Canada. My son, a carpenter—and a good one, though I say it—made the doctor a box for his things. The old lady dreads the new country, but she goes for the doctor's sake. There's money to be made there."

"I told you so," said grandmother.

"I don't believe it," said I.

"They've sold the house and gone to Liverpool to take ship; and you may find the truth for yourself, if you choose to take the trouble," said Dame Coombs. "I'm no chatterbox, to tell falsehoods about my neighbours."

And still I would not believe it until I had walked across the moor and had seen the shutters fast closed and the door barred, and not a sign of life about the place.

Then I gave up hope. I went home all pale and trembling, and sat down at grandmamma's knee.

"It's true," said I.

"And for the sake of so false a lad you'll see your grandfather ruined and break his heart, and leave me, that have nursed you from a babe, a widow."

I looked at her as she sobbed, and I found strength to say

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And one night the pain in my heart grew too great, and I went out among the purple heather on the moor, and there knelt down under the stars and prayed to be teken from the world.

"Give me to whom you will then, since my own love does not want me."

And then I crept upstairs and sat down on my bedside weak as though I had fainted.

I would have thanked heaven for forgetfulness just then, but it wouldn't come.

The next day Squire Turner was in the parlour as my accepted lover.

How pleased he was, and how the colour came back into grandfather's old face! And grannie grew so proud and kind, and all the house was aglow, and only I sad.

But I couldn't forget Evan—Evan whom I had loved so—sailing away from me without a word.

I suppose they all saw I looked sad.

The squire talked of my health, and would make me ride with him over the moors for strength.

The old folks said nothing. They knew what ailed me; only our little Scotch maid seemed to think there was aught wrong.

Once she said to me:

"What ails ye, miss? Your eye is dull and your cheek is pale, and your braw grand lover canna make ye smile; ye are na that ill, either."

"No, I am well enough," said I.

She looked at me wistfully.

"Gin ye'd tell me your all, I might tell ye a cure," she said.

But there was no cure for me in this world, and I couldn't open my heart to simple Jennie. So the days rolled by, and I was close on my marriage eve, and grannie and Dorothy Plume were busy with my wedding robes. I wished it were my shroud they were working at instead.

And one night the pain in my heart grew too great, and I went out among the purple heather on the moor, and there knelt down under the stars and prayed to be taken from the world, "for how can I live without Evan?" I said.

I spoke the words aloud, and then started up in affright, for there at my side was an elfish little figure, and I heard a cry that at first I scarce thought earthly. Yet it was but Scotch Jennie, who had followed me.

"Why do ye call for your true love now?" she said, "ye sent him fra ye for sake o' the young squire."

"How dare you follow and watch me?"

But she caught my sleeve.

"Dinna be vexed," she said. "Just bide a wee, and answer what I speer. It's for love of you, for I've seen ye waste like the snaw wreath in the sun sin the squire wooed ye. Was it your will the lad that loved the ground ye trod on should have his ring again?"

"What do you mean?" said I.

"I'll speak gin I lose my place," said Jennie. "I rode with the mistress to young Dr. Locke's place past the moor, and there she lighted and gave him a ring, and what she said I know not, but it turned him the tint o' death, and said he, 'There's na a drop o' true bluid in a woman 'gin she is false.' And he turned to wall and covered his eyes, an' your grannie rode home. There 'tis all I ken—wull it do?"

"Ay, Jennie," said I, "heaven bless you!"

And had I wings on my feet I could not have come to the cottage door sooner.

I stood before my grandmother, trembling and white, and I said:

"Oh, don't tell me, grannie, you have cheated me and robbed me of my true love by a lie. Did you steal the troth ring from my neck and give it back to Evan, as if from me? You I've loved and honoured my life long——"

She turned scarlet.

"True love!" she said, "you've but one true love now—Squire Turner."

"You have done it!" I cried. "It's written on your face."

And she looked down at that and fell to weeping.

"My own true love was breaking his heart," she said. "My husband and I had loved for forty years. I did it to save him. Could I let a girl's fancy, worth nothing, stand in my way, and see him a beggar in his old age? Oh, girl, girl!"

And then I fell down at her feet like a stone. I knew nothing for an hour or more; but then, when I was better, and they left me with Jennie, I bade her fetch my hood and cloak and her own and come with me, and away I went across the moor in the starlight to where

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the hall windows were ablaze with light, and asked the housekeeper to let me see the squire.

She stared at me for my boldness—no wonder—but called him. So in a moment he stood before me, with his cheeks flushed and his eyes bright, and led me into a little room and seated me.

"Agatha, my love, I hope no mischance brings you here."

But I stopped him.

"Not your love, Squire," I said. "I thank you for thinking so well of me, but after all that has passed I——"

I could say no more. He took my hand.

"Have I offended you, Agatha?" he said.

"Not you. The offence—the guilt—oh, I have been sorely cheated!" And all I could do was to sob.

At last strength came to me. I went back to the first and told him all—how we had been plighted to each other, waiting only for better prospects to be wed, and how, when he honoured me by an offer of his hand, I angered my grandmother by owning to the truth, and of the ring grannie had stolen from my breast and the false message that had been sent my promised husband from me.

"And though I never see Evan Locke again," said I, "still I can never be another man's true love, for I am his until I die."

Then as I looked all the rich colour faded out of the squire's face, and I saw the sight we seldom see more than once in a lifetime—a strong young man in tears.

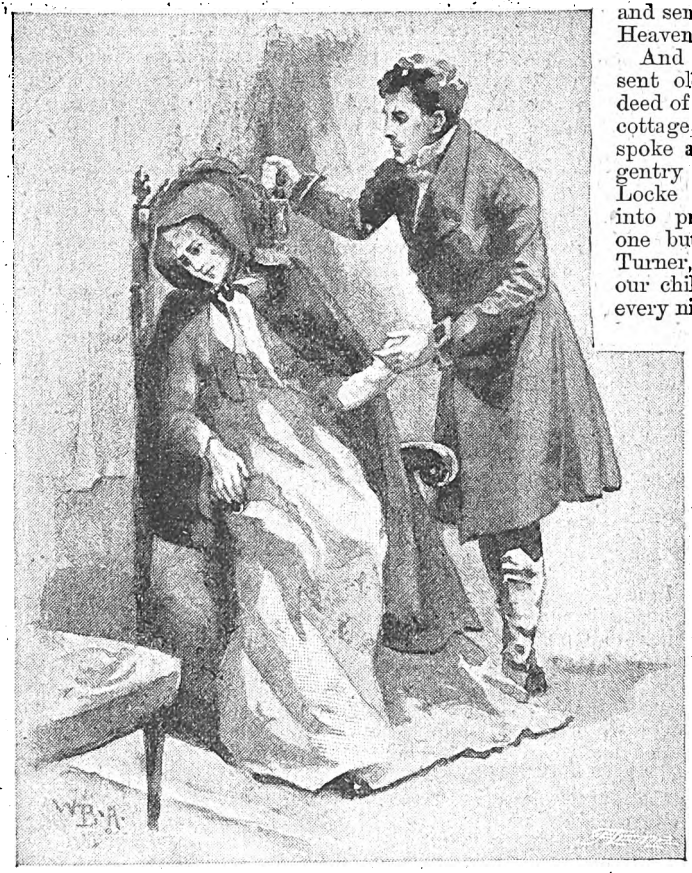
At last he arose and came to me.

"My little Agatha never loved me," he said. "Ah, me! the news is bad—I thought she did. This comes of vanity."

"Many a higher and fairer have hearts to give," I said. "Mine was gone ere you saw me."

And then, kind and gentle, as though I had not grieved him, he gave me his arm and saw me across the moor, and at the gate paused and whispered:

"Be at rest, Agatha. The *Golden George* has not sailed yet."



He took my hand. "Have offended you, Agatha?" he said.

I liked him better than I had ever done before that night when I told grannie that I would never wed him.

Eh! but he was fit to be a king—the grandest, kindest, best of living men, who rode away with the break of the morrow and never stopped till he reached Liverpool and found Evan Locke just ready to set foot upon the *Golden George*, and told him a tale that made his heart light and sent him back to me. Heaven bless him!

And who was it that sent old grandfather the deed of gift that made the cottage his own, and who spoke a kind word to the gentry for young Dr. Locke that helped him into practice? Still no one but the good Squire Turner, whom we taught our children to pray for every night.

For we were married, and in a few years had boys and girls at our knees; and when the eldest was nigh two, the thing I needed to make me quite happy happened—and from far over the sea, where he had been three twelvemonths, came our squire with the bonniest lady that ever blushed beside him, and the hall had a mistress at last—a mistress who loved the squire as I loved my Evan.

Eh! but it's an old story. She that I remembered a girl I saw in her coffin, withered and old. And then they opened the vault where the squire had slept ten years to put her beside him; and I've nothing left of Evan, my life and my love, but his memory, and it seems as if every hope and dream of joy I ever had was put away under tombstones. And even the *Golden George*, the great strong ship that would have borne my dear from me, has mouldered away at the bottom of the sea. And I think my wedding ring is like to outlast us all, for I have it yet, and I shall be ninety to-morrow.

Ninety! It's a good old age, and it can't be long now before I meet Evan and the rest in Heaven.

F. C. WOODSTONE.

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of Mr. G. Manville Fenn's "The Vibart Affair" to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source must be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. C Goolding, 335 Liverpool Road, N. Attempts for this week's prize may deal with any subject, and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, January 29th. Post-cards only, please.

"Said Sarcastic."

AN enthusiastic Yeomanry recruit, albeit not noted for his good riding, was well-known as an admirer of the fair sex.

During some recent manœuvres, he had the misfortune to have a rather frisky horse, which began to prance directly the band started. This caused the rider to lose his stirrups, and he only saved himself from a fall by clinging on to his horse's neck.

A sweep passing by, seeing him in this position, shouted out, much to the amusement of the crowd:

"Stop a kissing 'er, guv'nor, there's no mistletoe about."

Cured Them in Once.

SOME few years back the officer in command of the Royal Marines on board of one of H.M. battleships was much exercised in his mind as how to deal with two of his men who were continually fighting. Threats, pack-drill, and even "cells" were tried, but were of no avail. No sooner were they free than they flew at one another, and were at it again with worse results than before.

At last he hit on a very happy expedient. The next time the men were brought before him he set them to clean all the large windows on board, one inside, the other out, and neither to go to the next window till the other had finished.

The next morning they started, and after glaring at one another for three or four windows, the situation became too ludicrous and they both burst out laughing and have been good friends ever since.

A Good Reason For Why.

JUST after the Battle of Magersfontein, in South Africa, where the gallant 42nd Highlanders were almost cut up, an Irishman belonging to the same was seen the next morning turning over a huge heap of broken implements of warfare in search of something.

"What are you doing there, Private Murphy?" shouted an officer.

"Beg pardon, sor," was the quick reply, "but Oi'm lookin' for Private McCabe's helmet."

The officer then walked a few yards away, when a sudden thought struck him, so he shouted back:

"Why doesn't Private McCabe look for his own helmet?"

"'Cause his head was in it!" came the unexpected reply, and the officer walked away dumfounded.

Editors Are Not Thieves.

A RURAL preacher, finding the weather too warm, pulled off his coat and preached in his shirt-sleeves. After the sermon, a good brother, thinking an editor who was present would make a sensation of the incident, said to the parson:

"I don't suppose you knew, when you pulled off your coat to-day, that one of them newspaper fellers was at the meetin'?"

"Yes, I did," replied the preacher. "But I had my eye on the coat all the time!"

Where Democracy is Perfect.

THE spirit of democracy is dominant in Aberdeen. A little while before the city election a candidate for an office thought he would call on a few of the leading city councillors. He hailed a cab, and told the cabman to drive him to Councillor Bissett, the treasurer.

The councillor was found in a blacksmith's shop, shoeing a horse. "I'll see somebody better than this," said the candidate. "Drive me to Councillor Maitland's."

The cabman thereupon drove him to the pawnbroker's.

"Drive me to Councillor Gray's."

"I'm Councillor Gray, sir," replied the cabman.

He Didn't Stay There.

HALF-A-DOZEN commercials foregathered recently in a railway carriage, and as they neared a station where all tickets were inspected, the traveller nearest the door held out his hand for the bits of pasteboard, which his companions handed to him. He pretended to drop one ticket out of the window, and said:

"My goodness, Jones, I've lost your ticket! Get under the seat, quick!"

Alarmed and flurried, Jones obeyed. The train ran into the station, and the collector came up for the tickets, which were given him.

"Six tickets, five passengers?" he said with an inquiring look round.

"Oh, yes," explained the commercial nearest the door. "Jones always prefers to travel under the seat. See!"

The collector looked underneath the seat, and there, sure enough, was the sixth traveller. The collector said nothing, but it was evident that he had received a shock.

What Jones said had better not even be hinted at.

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The Call to Arms.

ONE of our brave volunteers was sitting at tea with his mother when the postman arrived with a letter, on the envelope of which were the words "On Her Majesty's Service."

"Mother," said the brave volunteer, "it has come at last; I was expecting it every day."

"Go, then, my son, and do your duty to your Queen and country," said his mother.

The son then opened the letter, only to find that it was a notice to inform him that the dog tax was due.

Not the First, Nor the Last.

AT a concert held in Sheffield recently, an artiste, having just concluded with a screaming sketch, was greatly applauded by the audience.

Upon stepping back to fill the vacant chair he had just previously left (each chair upon the stage was decorated with a British flag) he unfortunately alighted upon the floor instead of the chair.

This naturally caused a good deal of laughter amongst the company assembled. But the artiste was equal to the occasion.

"Ah well," he remarked, arising from his unhappy position, "I'm not the first one who has come to grief by trying to sit on the British flag."

This witty remark was the hit of the evening.

"No Use Bossin'."

A HULL bricklayer, who, on the death of a relative, had come into a fortune of a few hundred pounds decided to set up as a master builder, and as a commencement entered into a contract to erect a small villa. The building was started, but our friend soon found that an employer's life is not one of unalloyed bliss.

An old friend chanced to pass the house one morning, and was astonished to find his mate of other days wielding the trowel once more, and superintending him and other workmen was a strange foreman.

The following conversation ensued:

"Why, Jack, lad! How's this? I thought you was a gaffer noo!"

"So I is, man, so I is. But I soon found I was no use bossin' the men, so I determined to go to wark agen meself, and I've hired yon chap to look after us."

Marrying a Widow.

MRS. WILLIAMS is a widow with three boys, whom she has brought up with great firmness. It is one of her rules that obedience to her commands must come immediately, and explanation, if at all, at her leisure.

"Freddy," she said to her youngest boy, aged seven, "I am going to do something in a few days about which I want to talk to you a little."

"Yes, mamma," responded Freddy meekly.

"I am intending to marry Dr. Morse on Monday next week," said the lady, and then she paused for a moment.

"Yes, mamma," said Freddy again; then he added, with a look of awe on his small face: "I s'pose Dr. Morse won't know anything about it till the time comes, will he, mother?"

He Knew a Thing or Two.

SIR CHARLES GAVAN DUFFY—a former Premier of the Australian colony of Victoria—was once made the object of a peculiar embarrassment. A man on a public occasion presented himself to Sir Charles, who had been appointed to some petty Government office after a campaign in which there had been questionable electoral practices.

"I suppose," said Sir Charles, "that you are one of my supporters?"

"Three of them," answered the man, with a wink that was impossible to misunderstand.

He Visited His Uncle's.

A RATHER seedy and penniless man was passing down the Salt Market in Glasgow the other day, at the same time feeling very dry, entered a pawnshop and asked what they would give him on his coat.

The assistant eyed the coat with curiosity, then quietly advised him to take it to the nearest rag-store.

So feeling rather down in the mouth he entered a rag-store, threw the coat on the scales, expecting to get at least the price of one drink.

But imagine his dismay when the assistant, after examining it, coolly asked whether he would have a bit of toffee or a balloon.

Practical Demonstration.

A RESIDENT of Kingston recently engaged a boy to run errands and make himself generally useful. The lad, who was rather "green," was sent the other morning into the fowl-house to fetch the eggs.

"Go and see if there are any eggs," said his mistress, "but don't bring the china ones."

The lad departed, and in about five minutes' time reappeared with a few shells in his hands, and the front of his coat smeared all over with the contents of the eggs.

"Whatever have you been up to?" shouted the good lady.

"Why," said the boy, "you told me not to bring the china ones, and how could I tell which were china and which were not unless I broke 'em?"

Paid off.

His Free Confession.

THE following story, which hails from a North Country town, shows there are widely varying ideas as to what constitutes voluntary testimony on any subject.

"Did I understand you to say that this boy voluntarily confessed his share in the mischief done to the school-house?" asked the magistrate, addressing the determined-looking female parent of a small and dirty boy.

"Yes, sir, he did," the woman responded. "I just had to persuade him a little, and then he told me the whole thing voluntarily."

"How did you persuade him?" queried his worship.

"Well, first I gave him a good hiding," said the firm parent, "and then I put him to bed without any supper, and took his clothes away, and told him he'd stay in bed till he confessed what he'd done, if 'twas the rest of his days, and I should thrash him again in the morning. And in less than an hour he told me the whole story voluntarily."

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AN OLD BAILEY MYSTERY.

I DOUBT if any young man ever passed through such a varied experience as I met with when in the employ of Messrs. Lockyer and Legatt, the well-known firm of solicitors. For a time they were absolutely at the top of the tree, and one *cause célèbre* after another was placed in their hands. One secret of their success lay in the fact that they believed in retaining young and promising barristers with their way to make, rather than briefing counsel of assured position. By this means they discovered several budding geniuses, who would devote more time for considerably less money than their more comfortably placed brethren.

One of their pet *protégés* was Frank Mayhew, indeed old Lockyer prophesied great things of him, declaring he was a second Sergeant Ballantyne. I rather fancy the chief reason for his belief in Mayhew lay in the fact of the latter's engagement to Miss Connie Lockyer, the old man holding fast to the doctrine of "Cry me, and I'll cry thee."

I by no means shared my principal's enthusiasm for Mayhew, judging him, in fact, to be more of a steady goer than a showy speaker, nor blessed with "the gift of tongues," though plodding and painstaking to a degree.

I confess, therefore, that I felt surprised when I learnt that the firm had briefed him to appear for Stephen Leonard, who, as you will all remember, was charged with obtaining money by threats and menaces.

It was a strange case and at the time made a great stir, not only in the newspaper world, but throughout society. Stephen was a handsome ne'er-do-well, who had been shipped off to Australia by his sorrowing relatives so that he might disgrace himself, rather than them. That he would do both was, I firmly believe, greatly desired by the prime instigator of his banishment. This individual was a cousin of Stephen's father who since the latter's death had gained great influence over Mrs. Leonard, and who contrived in the course of a few years to gain the foolish woman's heart and fortune. To make a long story short, after some six years absence Stephen returned to find his mother dead and his step-father in possession of the property.

High words passed between them, and it is small wonder if the young man let indignation get the better of discretion, for it is no small thing to find your bitterest enemy in possession of the money that by all the laws of justice and of equity should be your own. Stephen's father had died a rich man, leaving all his property to his wife, to dispose of as she should so please, and the silly woman had pleased to leave her son penniless, to enrich the man he hated.

Finally, young Leonard held a pistol to Robert Grainger's head, and under threats of murder the wretched man was induced to sign a cheque for £15,000. Any other man but Stephen would have got clear of the country within twenty-four hours, but devil-may-care Steve must needs fool about for over a week, and when at last he stepped aboard a "liner" bound to the "States" he was greeted by a 'tec.

A woman had been seen with him in Liverpool but with their usual cleverness the police had neglected to detain her and since then she had skilfully managed to elude capture. Who, or what she was no one knew, but it was rumoured that she had made away with the greater part of the money, as but a small portion of the £15,000 could be traced.

Public sympathy ran in favour of the prisoner, but my opinion of his chance of getting off was but a poor one. The facts of the case were dead against him, all that he could hope for was a recommendation to mercy and a light sentence.

Even such hopes as these were to my mind not increased by the advocacy of Frank Mayhew. The surprise that so young and unknown a barrister should have been retained in so important a case was universal and as the time grew near Lockyer himself seemed to feel mistrust as to the capacity of the man on whom so much depended.

Leonard was utterly indifferent as to who was briefed on his behalf; the poor fellow alternated between fits of rage and a state of extreme depression. Chief among his anxieties appeared to be the safety of the woman whom the police had "missed" at Liverpool; so long as she was not taken he appeared to worry little as to the result of his trial.

"I shall know my fate soon enough," he said with a shrug. "Anyway, Granger hasn't got the money."

It was an anxious time for all of us more or less. Lockyer grew more irritable and Mayhew more nervous daily. In fact the latter's state somewhat alarmed me and I was fully prepared for him to break down any minute. Whatever else might be said no one could deny that a more hardworking counsel it were difficult to find; early and late he studied, compiling facts figures, and statistics as to the property possessed by Robert Grainger, with painstaking elaboration as futile as it was foolish.

One would have thought the man was going to contest a chancery bequest, instead of defending a prisoner at the Old Bailey. However that might be he fagged himself to the verge of brain fever, with the result that on the eve of the trial, he broke down and in a state of feverish exhaustion was peremptorily ordered to bed.

I shan't easily forget that afternoon, I can tell you. When the message arrived old Lockyer fairly lost his head. He raved, blasphemed, tore his hair, and anathematised himself and everyone else. Then, all but in tears, he took a cab and drove to Mayhew's house, where—as I afterwards learnt—he was with difficulty prevented from dragging his unfortunate prospective son-in-law out of bed.

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He returned to the office somewhat jaded but more subdued.

"What on earth we're to do, I don't know, Transom," he confided to me. "There's not a big man that would take it up for love or money so late as this and I simply daren't trust it to a junior."

"Best send round for Mayhew's papers," I said, "and start instructing Davidson. He's very fairly smart and thoroughly understands the line his 'lead' was going to take up. Anyway he'll make a better show than a stranger."

Lockyer gazed at me in a hopeless sort of fashion but at last signified his assent to the proposal, and I went round poste haste to Mayhew's.

I returned with the papers to find Lockyer closeted with a mysterious individual, who, according to that ubiquitous being, the office boy, had called soon after I left with a "lidy," the aforesaid "lidy" having departed some few minutes before I arrived.

I waited patiently for half-an-hour, when, there being no signs of the conference ending nor, equally strange, of Davidson having been sent for, I knocked at the door.

Lockyer came out with a queer expression on his face —half perplexed, half pleased.

"Let me have the papers, Transom," he said. "And I don't think you need wait. I half fancy Mayhew will be well enough to appear to-morrow, anyway don't mention his illness."

Considering I'd just left Mayhew tossing about with a temperature a good deal higher than his doctor cared about, such a statement was hardly likely to inspire me with confidence, I suppose my face expressed a part, at any rate, of my surprise, for he suddenly drew quite close to me and whispered emphatically:

"I can't explain now, Transome, but you may rest assured that we shall pull it off to-morrow. Unless," he added, with true lawyer's caution, "something unexpected happens."

Considerably mystified I took my leave, wondering what was up, and feeling, if the truth were known, more anxious about Stephen than Mayhew.

The court was packed the following day. All the best dressed women, no less than the most popular men, in or about town, were in evidence. Newspaper artists jostled society reporters, while as many of the junior bar as could cram in leavened the whole.

Stephen Leonard looked well and remained perfectly impassive throughout the proceedings. Only once did he show traces of emotion, and that was when his counsel commenced to speak.

I say, "counsel" but who and what the man could be who appeared for him I for one could not determine. I had left Mayhew that morning, in fact not half an hour ago, in a darkened room, delirious with pain, and too weak to lift a finger. Yet had it not been for my positive knowledge to the contrary, I could have sworn that it was Mayhew, and no other, who spoke in such impassioned and soul stirring accents. The same strongly marked eyebrows, nervous lips and aquiline nose, the same irresolute movements of the hand. Face, figure, gestures, voice—ah! no, there at least was a dissimilarity. Mayhew possessed an even, almost a monotonous delivery, and his voice, though not unpleasing, was neither strong nor telling. The deep, strong tones that echoed through the hall, vibrating with tenderness, roused to passion, sinking to entreaty only to rise upon a storm of indignation and contempt, who but a fool could have supposed that it was Mayhew who so played upon the hearts of all who heard him?

As I say, Leonard had given a start when the speech for the defence commenced, and throughout the whole of what was considered one of the finest orations ever listened to in court, he sat gazing at the man in silent but profound astonishment.

As you all know the verdict was "Not Guilty" and for once the jury and the public were agreed.

No one ever suspected that there was a mystery in connection with Mayhew's great success, and for a long time I despaired of ever finding the solution. Lockyer was always conveniently deaf when I approached him on the subject, and Mayhew simply would not answer. I was beginning to fancy that I should have to give it up when chance all unexpectedly put the key into my hands.

I was travelling in the States a year or two later when I ran up against Stephen Leonard. He was always a cheery good-natured sort of chap, and dragged me home to "see his wife," without giving me a chance of refusing.

I found Mrs. Leonard a charming woman with a sweet face and smile, and a voice which reminded me in an odd sort of way of somebody—whom, I could not tell.

After dinner we all went to the theatre. I forget the name of the piece now, suffice it to say that the chief interest lay in a "trial" scene—that good old prop beloved of every dramatist—wherein the hero's innocence is proved at the same time that the villain's wickedness is made manifest.

As the man who played the part of prisoner's counsel took his place, I started to my feet. "Good Heavens," I cried, "it's the man who personated Mayhew."

Leonard hurried me from the theatre and after a little hesitation told me the truth.

At the time he returned to England, he was married, and his wife, who accompanied him, was in very delicate health. He was half mad with anxiety concerning her, and, without means or the hope of getting money save from his step-father, was driven to take the rash and foolish course he had adopted. It was his wife's illness that delayed his departure, and it was—as I had already guessed—his wife who had accompanied him to Liverpool.

"But the barrister—I mean the actor—I mean—in Heaven's name, Leonard, who is the man who won your case?"

"My wife's brother," he replied, "and one of the cleverest actors in America—or for that matter anywhere—and a master of make-up. My wife heard of Mayhew's illness and was convinced that if only her brother, aided by herself and old Lockyer, could appear in Mayhew's stead, the day would be won. The rest you know."

Mayhew, of course, had no choice in the matter, and was quite content to reap the kudos his supposed eloquence had gained him. I often smile to myself when I hear men wonder why it is he never fulfilled the promise of his youth, for needless to relate the defence of Stephen Leonard was Mayhew's one and only hit.

The young fellow himself? Well, next time a certain actor from the States is advertised to play, you go and see him. He's changed a good bit certainly, but he still retains his voice.

But even so, you'll never hear him to the same advantage as I did, when he played the lead in "An Old Bailey Mystery."

J. P.

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Composite Picture Competition.

- RESULT. -

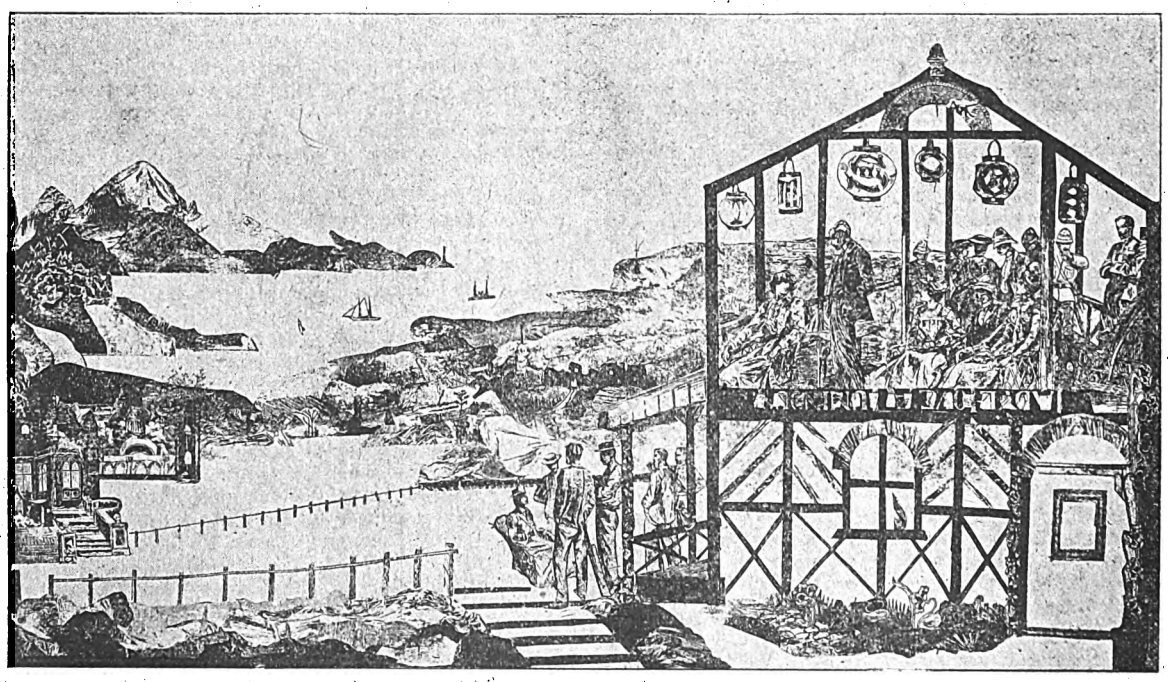
I AM delighted with the artistic ability shown by my readers in this competition. Most of the entries were of a high order.

Some of the competitors must have spent a great amount of time and patience on their productions.

I have no hesitation, however, in awarding the first prize of £2 2s. to MR. HARRY NOBBS, 27 Mount Pleasant Road, Stroud Green, N., who not only sent in the largest picture (23in. by 13in.), but also showed most careful attention to detail.

The following is the list of competitors whose pictures merited a prize, and to each of whom one of our stereoscopes has been sent:

J. Allen, 12 Sydney Street, Glasgow; J. Baker, 4 Argyll Street, Darwen, Lancs.; J. Child, 2 Montpellier Terrace, Swansea; N. Douglas, 11 Sinclair Gardens, Kensington, W.; M. Green, 15 Richmond Road, Brighton; E. Hope, Frances Cottage, Goginan, near Aberystwyth, S. Wales; M. Martin, 1 Montague Gardens, Castle Avenue, Dover; A. Plowright, 22 Pine Road, Cricklewood, N.W.; G. Sharples, 5 Fisher Street, Blackpool; W. Yeaman, 174 Regent Street, South Shields, Durham.



"HAPPY DAYS." (The above is a reproduction of the winning picture.)

Making Both Ends Meet.

IT should not be difficult to provide a substantial and varied breakfast for two people for five mornings for the sum of five shillings. On the whole, the entries were very good, but some competitors lost sight of the fact that variety in the menus should be considered, and only provided bacon and eggs for every morning. Others forgot that cocoa, although very wholesome and nourishing, is apt to become monotonous if taken every day, and many, too, omitted to provide some little dainty—such as jam, marmalade, or fruit—which is generally liked as a finish up to the first meal of the day. Three or four of the entries were extremely good, and it was hard to decide between them.

However, after reading them through most carefully, and comparing each item, I think that the first prize of £1 1s. is fairly won by MRS. PENTNEY, 98 Queen's Road, Dalston, N.E., who has provided menus which are at once economical, varied, and substantial.

The next best twenty, to whom I am sending a copy of Mrs. Williamson's popular six shilling novel, "Fortune's Sport," are:

M. Burt, Mount Pleasant, Ashley Road, Upper Parkstone, Dorset; M. Busby, 5 Eton Place, Plumstead; J. T. Davidson, 184 Slatefield Street, Glasgow; M. Dobson, 103 Beston Hill, Leeds; E. Everest, 74 Barnwell Road, S.W.; T. Fisher, 35 Mentone Mansions, S.W.; E. H. Harland, "Lindale," West Croydon; F. R. Hearse, 15 Vivian Road, E.; A. Herriot, 46 Fauldhouse Street, Glasgow; N. Lang, 25 Colet Gardens, West Kensington; M. Lilly, 97 Westminster Bridge Road, Lambeth; M. Nevin, 26 Balls Road East, Birkenhead; K. Nicol, 70 Clova Road, E.; M. Pritchard, 20 Claxton Grove, Hammersmith; M. Puttet, 111 Shenley Road, S.E.; M. Riley, 22 Myddleton Buildings, Islington, N.; A. Schmieden, 9 Juxon Street, Lambeth; F. Sentance, 271 Friern Road, S.E.; M. Shepherd, 128 Stephendale Road, Fulham; M. Wright, 18 Brantsfield Avenue, Edinburgh.

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THE ANGEL OF THE REVOLUTION

By GEORGE GRIFFITH

CHAPTER LXI. *(continued).*

After the battles of Dover and Harwich the invading forces advanced upon London in the following order: The Army of the South had landed at Deal, Dover, and Folkestone in three divisions, and after a series of terrific conflicts had fought their way *via* Chatham, Maidstone, and Tunbridge to the banks of the Thames, and occupied all the commanding positions from Shooter's Hill to Richmond. These three forces were composed entirely of French and Italian army corps, and numbered from first to last nearly four million men.

On the north the invading force was almost wholly Russian, and was under the command of the Czar in person, in whom the supreme command of the armies of the League had by common consent been now vested. A constant service of transports plying day and night between Antwerp and Harwich had placed at his disposal a force about equal to that of the Army of the South, although he had lost over seven hundred thousand men before he was able to occupy the line of heights from Hornsey to Hampstead, with flanking positions at Brondesbury and Harlesden to the west, and at Tottenham, Stratford, and Barking to the east.

By the 29th of November all the railways were in the hands of the invaders. A chain of war-balloons between Barking and Shooter's Hill closed the Thames. The forts at Tilbury had been destroyed by an aerial bombardment. A flotilla of submarine torpedo vessels had blown up the defences of the estuary of the Thames and Medway, and led to the fall of Sheerness and Chatham, and had then been docked at Sheerness, there being no further present use for them.

The other half of the squadron, supported by a few battleships and cruisers which had survived the Battle of Dover, had proceeded to Portsmouth, destroyed the booms and submarine defences, while a detachment of aerostats shelled the land defences, and then, in a moment of wanton revenge, had blown up the venerable hulk of the *Victory*, which had gone down at her moorings with her flag still flying as it had done a hundred years before at the fight of Trafalgar. After this inglorious achievement they had been laid up in dock to wait for their next opportunity of destruction, should it ever occur.

London was thus cut off from all communication, not only with the outside world, but even from the rest of England. The remnants of the armies of defence had been gradually driven in upon the vast wilderness of bricks and mortar, which now held more than eight millions of men, women, and children, hemmed in by long lines of batteries and entrenched camps, from which thousands of guns hurled their projectiles far and wide into the crowded masses of the houses, shattering them with bursting shells, and laying whole streets in ruins, while overhead the war-balloons slowly circled hither and thither, dropping their fire-shells and completing the ruin and havoc wrought by the artillery of the siege-trains.

Under such circumstances surrender was really only a matter of time, and that time had very nearly come. The London and North-Western Railway, which had been the last to fall into the hands of the invaders, had been closed for over a week, and food was running very short. Eight millions of people massed together in a space of thirty or forty square miles area can only be fed and kept healthy under the most favourable conditions. Hemmed in as London now was, from being the best ordered great city in the world, it had degenerated with frightful rapidity into a vast abode of plague and famine, a mass of human suffering and misery beyond all conception or possibility of description.

Defence there was now practically none, but still the invaders did not leave their vantage ground on the hills, and not a soldier of the League had so far set foot in London proper. Either the besiegers preferred to starve the great city into surrender at discretion and then extort ruinous terms, or else they hesitated to plunge into that tremendous gulf of human misery, maddened by hunger and made desperate by despair. If they did so hesitate they were wise, for London was too vast to be carried by assault or by any series of assaults.

No army could have lived in its wilderness of streets swarming with enemies who would have fought them from house to house and street to street. Once they had entered that mighty maze of streets and squares both their artillery and their war-balloons would have been useless, for they would only have buried friend and foe in common destruction. There were plenty of ways into London, but the way out was a very different matter.

Had a general assault been attempted, not a man would ever have got out of London alive. The commanders of the League saw this clearly, and so they kept their position on the heights, wasted the city with an almost constant bombardment, and, while they drew their supplies from the fertile lands in their rear, lay on their arms, and waited for the inevitable.

Within the besieged area martial law prevailed universally. Riots were of daily, almost hourly, occurrence, but they were repressed with an iron hand, and the rioters were shot down in the streets without mercy; for, though siege and famine were bad enough, anarchy breaking out amidst that vast sweltering mass of human beings would have been a thousand times worse, and so the King, who, assisted by the Prime Minister and the Cabinet Council, had assumed the control of the whole city, had directed that order was to be maintained at any price.

The remains of the army were quartered in the parks under canvas, and billeted in houses throughout the various

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districts, in order to support the police in repressing disorder and protecting property. Still, in spite of all that could be done, matters were rapidly coming to a terrible pass. In a week, at the latest, the horses of the cavalry would be eaten. For a fortnight London had almost lived upon horse-flesh. In the poorer quarters there was not a dog to be seen, and a sewer rat was considered a delicacy.

Eight million mouths had made short work of even the vast supplies that had been hurriedly poured into the city as soon as the invasion had become a certainty, and absolute starvation was now a matter of a few days at the outside. There were millions of money lying idle, but very soon a five-pound note would not buy even a little loaf of bread.

But famine was by no means the only horror that afflicted London during those awful days and nights. All round the heights the booming of cannon sounded incessantly. Huge shells went screaming through the air overhead to fall and burst amidst some swarming hive of humanity, scattering death and mutilation where they fell, and high up in the air the fleet of aerostats perpetually circled, dropping their fire-shells and blasting-cartridges on the dense masses of houses until a hundred conflagrations were raging at once in different parts of the city.

No help had come from outside. Indeed none was to be expected. There was only one Power in the world that was now capable of coping with the forces of the victorious League, but its overtures had been rejected, and neither the King nor any of his advisers had now the slightest idea as to how those who controlled it would now use it. No one knew the real strength of the Terrorists or the Federation which they professed to control.

All that was known was that, if they chose, they could with their aerial fleet sweep the war-balloons from the air in a few moments and destroy the batteries of the besiegers; but they had made no sign after the rejection of their President's offer to prevent the landing of the forces of the League on condition that the British Government accepted the Federation and resigned its powers in favour of its executive.

The refusal of those terms had now cost more than a million British lives, and an incalculable amount of human suffering and destruction of property. Until the news of the disaster of Dover had actually reached London, no one had really believed that it was possible for an invading force to land on British soil and exist for twenty-four hours. Now the impossible had been made possible, and the last crushing blow must fall within the next few days. After that who knew what might befall.

So far as could be seen, Britain lay helpless at the mercy of her foes. Her allies had ceased to exist as independent Powers, and the Russian and the Gaul were thundering at her gates as, fifteen hundred years before, the Goth had thundered at the gates of the Eternal City in the last days of the Roman Empire.

If the terms of the Federation could have been offered again, it is probable that the King of England would have been the first man to own his mistake and that of his advisers and accept them, for now the choice lay between utter and humiliating defeat and the breaking up of the Empire, and the recognition of the Federation. After all, the kinship of a race was a greater fact in the supreme hour of national disaster than the maintenance of a dynasty or the perpetuation of a particular form of government.

It was not now a question of nation against nation, but of race against race. The fierce flood of war had swept away all smaller distinctions. It was necessary to rise to the altitude of the problem of the government, not of nations, but of the world. Was the genius of the East or of the West to shape the future destinies of the human race? That was the mighty problem of which the events of the next few weeks were to work out the solution, for when the sun set on the Field of Armageddon the fate of Humanity would be fixed for centuries to come.

CHAPTER LXII.

AN ENVOY OF DELIVERANCE.

FROM the time that the Tsar had received the conditional declaration of war from the President of the Anglo-Saxon Federation in America to nightfall on the 29th of November, when the surrender of the capital of the British Empire was considered to be a matter of a few days only, the Commander-in-Chief of the forces of the League was absolutely in the dark, not only as to the actual intentions of the Terrorists, if they had any, but also as to the doings of his allies in America.

According to the stipulations arranged between himself and the confidential agent of the American Government, the blockading flotilla of dynamite cruisers ought to have sailed from America as soon as the cypher message containing the news of the Battle of Dover reached New York. The message had been duly sent, *via* Queenstown and New York, and had been acknowledged in the usual way by the Federation agent at the other end of the cable which had been re-connected for the sole use of the President. This accounted for the fact that no further reply had come to it, and will explain why a month had elapsed without the appearance of the promised squadron.

Other messages had been sent to which no reply had been received, and a swift French cruiser, which had been launched at Brest since the Battle of Dover, had been despatched across the Atlantic to discover the reason of this strange silence. She had gone, but she had never returned. The Atlantic highway appeared to be barred by some invisible force, no vessels came from the westward, and those which started from the east where never heard of again.

His Majesty had treated the summons of the President of the Federation with silent contempt, just as such a victorious autocrat might have been expected to do. True, he knew the terrific power wielded by the Terrorists through their aerial fleet, and he had an uncomfortable conviction, which refused to be entirely stifled, that in the days to come he would have to reckon with the same fleet.

But that a member of the Terrorist brotherhood could by any possible means have placed himself at the head of any body of men sufficiently numerous or well-disciplined to make them a force to be seriously reckoned with in military warfare, his Majesty had never for a moment believed.

And, more than this, however disquieting might be the uncertainty due to the ominous silence on the other side of the Atlantic, and the non-arrival of the expected fleet, there stood the great and significant fact that the army of the League had been permitted, without molestation either from the Terrorists, or the Federation in whose name they had presumed to declare war upon him, not only to destroy what remained of the British fleet, but to completely invest the very capital of Anglo-Saxondom itself.

All this had been done; the sacred soil of Britain itself had been violated by the invading hosts; the army of defence had been slowly, and at a tremendous sacrifice of life on both sides, forced back from line after line, and position after position, into the city itself; his batteries were raining their hail of shot and shell from the heights round London, and his aerostats were hurling ruin from the sky upon the crowded millions locked up in the beleaguered space; and yet the man who had presumed to tell him that the hour in which he set foot on British soil would be the last of his Empire had done absolutely nothing to interrupt the march of conquest.

From this it will be seen that Alexander Romanoff was at least as completely in the dark as to the possible course of the events of the near future as was the King of England himself, shut up in his capital and cut off from all communication from the rest of the world.

On the morning of the 29th of November there was held at the Prime Minister's rooms in Downing Street a Cabinet Council, presided over by the King in person. After the

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Council had remained for about an hour in earnest consultation, a stranger was admitted to the room in which they were sitting.

The reader would have recognised him in a moment as Maurice Colston, otherwise Alexis Mazanoff, for he was dressed almost exactly as he had been on that memorable night, just thirteen months before, when he made the acquaintance of Richard Arnold on the Thames Embankment.

Well-dressed, well-fed, and perfectly at ease, he entered the Council Chamber without any aggressive assumption, but still with the quiet confidence of a man who knows that he is practically master of the situation. How he had even got into London, beleaguered as it was on every side in such fashion that no one could get out of it without being seen and shot by the besiegers, was a mystery, but how he could have in his possession, as he had, a despatch dated thirty-six hours previously in New York was a still deeper mystery, and upon neither of these points did he make the slightest attempt to enlighten the members of the British Cabinet.

All that he said was that he was the bearer of a message from the President of the Anglo-Saxon Federation in America, and that he was instructed to return that night to New York with such answer as the British Government might think fit to make to it. It was this message that had been the subject of the deliberations of the Council before his admission, and its nett effect was as follows.

It was now practically certain, indeed proved to demonstration, that the forces at the command of the British Government were not capable of coping with those brought against them by the commanders of the League, and that, therefore, Britain, if left to her own resources, must inevitably succumb and submit to such terms as her conquerors might think fit to impose upon her.

The choice before the British Government thus lay between surrender to her foreign enemies, whose objects were well known to be dismemberment of the Empire and the reduction of Great Britain to the rank of a third-class Power—to say nothing of the payment of a war-indemnity which could not fail to be paralysing—and the consent of those who controlled the destinies of the mother country to accept a Federation of the whole Anglo-Saxon race, to waive the merely national idea in favour of the racial one, and to permit the Executive Council of the Federation to assume those governmental functions which were exercised at present by the King and the British Houses of Parliament.

In a word, the choice lay between conquest by a league of foreign Powers and the merging of Britain into the Federation of the English-speaking peoples of the world.

If the former choice were taken the only prospect possible under the condition of things was a further enormous sacrifice of human life on the side of both Britain and its enemies, a gigantic loss in money, the crippling of British trade and commerce, and then a possible—nay, probable—social revolution to which the message distinctly pointed.

If the latter choice were taken the forces of the Federation would be at once brought into the field against those of the League, the seige of London would be raised, the power of the invaders would be effectually broken for ever, and the stigma of conquest finally wiped away.

It is only just to record the fact that in this supreme crisis of British history the man who most strongly insisted upon the acceptance of the terms which he had previously, as he now confessed in the most manly and outspoken fashion, rejected in ignorance of the true situation of affairs, was the man who believed that he would lose a crown by accepting them.

When the Ambassador of the Federation had been presented to the Council, the King rose in his place and handed to him with his own hands a sealed letter, saying as he did so:

"Mr. Mazanoff, I am still to a great extent in ignorance as to the inexplicable combination of events which has made it necessary for me to return this affirmative answer to the message of which you are the bearer. I am, however, fully aware that the Earl of Alanmere, whose name I have seen at the foot of this document with the most profound astonishment, is in a position to do what he says.

"The course of events has been exactly that which he predicted. I know, too, that whatever causes may have led him to unite himself to those known as the Terrorists, he is an English nobleman and a man to whom falsehood or bad faith is absolutely impossible. In your marvellous aerial fleet I know also that he wields the only power capable of being successfully opposed to those terrible machines which have wrought such havoc upon the fleets and armies not only of Britain, but of Europe.

"After all, the first duty of a Constitutional King is not to himself and his dynasty, but to his country and his people, and therefore I feel that it will be better for me and mine to be citizens of a free Federation of the English-speaking peoples, and of the nations to which Britain has given birth, than the titular sovereign and Royal family of a conquered country, holding the mockery of Royalty on the sufferance of their conquerors.

"Tell Lord Alanmere from me that I now accept the terms he has offered as President of the Anglo-Saxon Federation, first, because at all hazards I would see Britain delivered from her enemies, and, secondly, because I have chosen rather to be an English gentleman without a crown, than to wear a crown which, after all, would only be a gift from my conquerors."

Edward VII. spoke with visible emotion, but with a dignity which even Mazanoff, little and all as he respected the name of king, felt himself compelled to recognise and respect. He took the letter with a bow that was more one of reverence than of courtesy, and as he put it into the breast-pocket of his coat, he said:

"The President will receive your Majesty's reply with as genuine pleasure as I shall experience in giving it to him. Though I am a Russian, without a drop of English blood in my veins, I have always looked upon the British race as the real bulwark of freedom, and I rejoice that the King of England has not permitted either tradition or personal feeling to stand in the way of the last triumph of the Anglo-Saxon race.

"As long as the English language is spoken your Majesty's name will be held in greater honour for this sacrifice which you make to-day than will that of any other English king for the greatest triumph of arms ever achieved in the history of your country.

"I must now take my leave, for I must be in New York to-morrow night. I have your word that I shall not be watched or followed after I leave here. Hold the city for six days more at all costs, and on the seventh at the latest the seige shall be raised and the enemies of Britain destroyed in their own entrenchments."

So saying, the envoy of the Federation bowed once more to the King and the astonished members of his council, and was escorted to the door.

Once in the street he strode away rapidly through Parliament Street and the Strand, then up Drury Lane, until he reached the door of a mean-looking house in a squalid court, and entering this with a latchkey, disappeared. In half-an hour he emerged a seedy, half-starved looking individual, muffled from head to heel in a long shabby ulster, and made his way northward by Gray's Inn Road towards Chalk Farm.

Three hours later a Russian soldier of the line, wearing an almost imperceptible knot of red ribbon in one of the button-holes of his tunic, passed through the Russian lines on Hampstead Heath unchallenged by the sentries, and made his way northward to Northaw Wood, which he reached soon after nightfall.

Within half-an-hour the *Ithuriel* rose from the midst of a thick clump of trees like a grey shadow rising into the

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night, and darted southward and upward at such a speed that the keenest eyes must soon have lost sight of her from the earth.

She passed over the beleaguered city at a height of nearly ten thousand feet, and then swept sharply round to the eastward. She stopped immediately over the lights of Sheerness, and descended to within a thousand feet of the dock in which could be seen the detachment of the French submarine vessels lying waiting to be sent on their next errand of destruction.

As soon as those on board her had made out the dock clearly she ascended a thousand feet and went about half a mile to the southward. From that position she poured a rapid hail of shells into the dock, which was instantly transformed into a cavity vomiting green flame and fragments of iron and human bodies. In five minutes nothing was left of the dock or its contents but a churned-up swamp of muddy water and shattered stone-work.

Then, her errand so far accomplished, the air-ship sped away to the south-westward, and within an hour she had destroyed in like fashion the submarine squadron in the Government dock at Portsmouth, and was winging her way westward to New York with the reply of the King of England to the President of the Federation.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE EVE OF ARMAGEDDON.

WHEN the news of the destruction of the two divisions of the submarine squadron reached the headquarters of the League on the evening of the 29th, it would have been difficult to say whether anger or consternation most prevailed among the leaders. A council of war was hurriedly summoned to discuss an event which it was impossible to look upon as anything less than a calamity.

The destruction which had been wrought was of itself disastrous enough, for it deprived the League of the chief means by which it had destroyed the British Fleet, and kept command of the sea. But even more terrible than the actual destruction was the unexpected suddenness with which the blow had been delivered.

For five months, that is to say from the recapture of the *Lucifer* at Aberdeen, the Tzar and his coadjutors had seen nothing of the operations of the Terrorists, and now, without a moment's warning, this apparently omnipresent and yet almost invisible force had struck once more with irresistible effect, and instantly vanished back into the mystery out of which it had come.

Who could tell when the next blow would fall, or in what shape the next assault would be delivered? In the presence of such enemies, invisible and unreachable, the commanders of the League, to their rage and disgust, felt themselves, on the eve of their supreme victory, as impotent as a man armed with a sword would have felt in front of a Gatling gun.

Consternation naturally led to divided councils. The French and Italian commanders were for an immediate general assault on London at all hazards, and the enforcement of terms of surrender at the point of the sword. The Tsar, on the other hand, insisted on the pursuance of the original policy of reduction by starvation, as he rightly considered that, great as the attacking force was, it would be practically swamped amidst the infuriated millions of the besieged, and that, even if the assault were successful, the loss of life would be so enormous that the conquest of the rest of Britain—which in such a case would almost certainly rise to a man—would be next door to impossible.

He, however, so far yielded as to agree to send a message to the King of England to arrange terms of surrender, if possible at once, in order to save further bloodshed, and then, if these terms were rejected, to prepare for a general assault on the seventh day from then.

These terms were accepted as a compromise, and the next morning the bombardment ceased, both from the land batteries and the air. At daybreak on the 30th an envoy left the Tsar's headquarters in one of the war-balloons, flying a flag of truce, and descended in Hyde Park. He was received by the King in council in Buckingham Palace, and, after a lengthy deliberation, an answer was returned to the effect that on condition the bombardment ceased for the time being, London would be surrendered at noon on the 6th of December if no help had by that time arrived from the other cities of Britain. These terms, after considerable opposition from General le Gallifet and General Cosenz, the Italian commander-in-chief, were adopted and ratified at noon that day, almost at the very moment that Alexis Mazanoff was presenting the reply of the King of England to the President of the Federation in New York.

As the relief expedition had been fully decided upon, whether the British Government recognised the Federation or not, everything was in readiness for an immediate start as soon as the *Ithuriel* brought definite news as to the acceptation or rejection of the President's second offer. For the last seven weeks the ten dockyards of the east coast of America, and of Halifax in Nova Scotia, had been thronged with shipping and swarming with workmen and sailors.

All the vessels which had been swept off the Atlantic by the war storm, and which were of sufficient size and speed to take part in the expedition, had been collected at these eleven ports. Whole fleets of liners of half-a-dozen different nationalities which had been laid up since the establishment of the blockade, were now lying alongside the quays taking in vast quantities of wheat and miscellaneous food-stuffs which were being poured into their holds from the glutted markets of America and Canada. Every one of these vessels was fitted up as a troopship, and by the time all arrangements were complete, more than a thousand vessels, carrying on an average twelve hundred men each, were ready to take the sea.

In addition to these there was a fleet of warships as yet unscathed by shot or shell, consisting of thirty battleships, a hundred and ten cruisers, armoured and unarmoured, and the flotilla of dynamite cruisers which had been constructed by the late Government at the expense of the Capitalist Ring. There were no less than two hundred of these strange but terribly destructive craft, the lineal descendants of the *Vesuvius*, which, as the naval reader will remember, was commissioned in 1890.

They were double-hulled vessels built on the whale-back plan, and the compartments between the inner and outer hull could be wholly or partially filled with water. When they were entirely filled the hull sank below the surface, leaving nothing as a mark to an enemy save a platform standing ten feet above the water. This platfom, constructed throughout of six-inch nickel-steel, was of oval shape, a hundred feet long and thirty broad in its greatest diameter, and carried the heavily armoured wheel-house and conning-tower, two funnels, six ventilators, and two huge pneumatic guns, each seventy-five feet long, working on pivots nearly amidships.

These weapons with an air-charge of three hundred atmospheres would throw four hundred pounds of dynamite to a distance of three miles with such accuracy that the projectile would invariably fall within a space of twenty feet square. The guns could be discharged once a minute, and could thus hurl 48,000 lbs. of dynamite an hour upon a hostile fleet or fortifications.

Each cruiser also carried two under-water torpedo tubes ahead and two astern. The funnels emitted no smoke, but merely supplied draught to the petroleum furnaces, which burned with practically no waste and developed a head of steam which drove the long submerged hulls through the water at a rate of thirty-two knots, or more than thirty-six miles an hour.

Such was the enormous naval armament, manned by nearly a hundred thousand men, which hoisted the Federation flag at one o'clock on the afternoon of the 30th of

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November, when orders were telegraphed north and south from Washington to get ready for sea. Two hours later the vast flotilla of warships and transports had cleared American waters, and was converging towards a point indicated by the intersection of the 41st parallel of latitude with the 40th meridian of longitude.

At this ocean rendezvous the divisions of the fleet and its convoys met and shaped their course for the mouth of the English Channel. They proceeded in column of line abreast three deep, headed by the dynamite cruisers, after which came the other warships which had formed the American Navy, and after these again came the troopships and transports properly protected by cruisers on their flanks and in their rear.

The commander of every warship and transport had the most minute instructions as to how he was to act on reaching British waters, and what these were will become apparent in due course. The weather was fairly good for the time of year, and, as there was but little danger of collision on the now deserted waters of the Atlantic, the whole flotilla kept at full speed all the way. As, however, its speed was necessarily limited by that of its slowest steamer until the scene of action was reached, it was after midnight on the 5th of December when its various detachments had reached their appointed stations on the English coast.

At the entrance of the English Channel and St. George's Channel a few scouting cruisers, flying French, Russian, and Italian colours, had been run down and sunk by the dynamite cruisers. Strict orders had been given by Tremayne to destroy everything flying a hostile flag, and not to permit any news to be taken to England of the approach of the flotilla.

The Federation was waging a war, not merely of conquest and revenge, but of extermination, and no mercy was to be shown to its enemies, who had shown none in their march of victory from one end of Europe to another.

While the Federation fleet had been crossing the Atlantic other events no less important had been taking place in England and Scotland. The hitherto apparently inert mass of the population had suddenly awakened out of its lethargy. In town and country alike men forsook their daily avocations as if by one consent. As in America, artisans, pitmen, clerks, and tradesmen, were suddenly transformed into soldiers, who drilled, first in squads of ten, and then in hundreds and thousands, and finally in tens of thousands, all uniformed alike in rough grey breeches and tunics, with a knot of red ribbon in the button-hole, and all armed with rifle, bayonet, and revolver, which they seemed to handle with a strange and ominous familiarity.

All the railway traffic over the island was stopped, and the rolling-stock collected at the great stations along the lines to London, and at the same time all the telegraph wires communicating with the south and east were cut. As day after day passed, signs of an intense but strongly suppressed excitement became more and more visible all over the provinces, and especially in the great towns and cities.

In London very much the same thing had happened. Hundreds of thousands of civilians vanished during those seven days of anxious waiting for the hour of deliverance, and in their place sprang up orderly regiments of grey-clad soldiers, who saw the red knot in each other's button-holes, and welcomed each other as comrades unknown before.

To the surprise of the commanders of the regular army, orders had been issued by the King that all possible assistance was to be rendered to these strange legions, which had thus so suddenly sprung into existence; and the result was that when the sun set on the 5th of December, the twenty-first day of the total blockade of London, the beleaguered space contained over two millions of armed men, hungering both for food and vengeance, who, like the five millions of

Influenza

THE ENEMY AT HOME.

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their fellow-countrymen outside London, were waiting for a sign from the sky to fling themselves upon the entrapped and unsuspecting invader.

That night countless eyes were upturned throughout the length and breadth of Britain to the dun pall of wintry cloud that overspread the land. Yet so far, so perfect was the discipline of this gigantic host, not a sign of overt hostile movement had been made, and the commanders of the armies of the League looked forward with exulting confidence to the moment, now only a few hours distant, when the capital of the British Empire, cut off from all help, should be surrendered into their hands in accordance with the terms agreed upon.

When night fell the *Ithuriel* was floating four thousand feet above Aberdeen. Arnold and Natasha, wrapped in warm furs, were standing on deck impatiently watching the sun sinking down over the sea of clouds which lay between them and the earth.

"There it goes at last!" exclaimed Natasha, as the last of the level beams shot across the cloud-sea and the rim of the pale disc sank below the surface of the vapoury ocean. "The time that we have waited and worked for so long has come at last. This is the eve of Armageddon! Who would think it, floating up here above the clouds and beneath those cold, calmly shining stars! And yet the fate of the whole world is trembling in the balance, and the doings of the next twenty-four hours will settle the destiny of mankind for generations to come. The hour of the Revolution has struck at last——"

"And therefore it is time that the Angel of the Revolution should give the last signal with her own hand!" said Arnold, seized with a sudden fancy. "Come, you shall start the dynamo yourself."

(*To be continued.*)

VISITOR: "And who are you, my little man?"

Little Boy (with conscious pride): "I'm the baby's brother."

"Do you believe that woman is man's equal?"

"Well, that depends upon who the man is and who the woman is."

"You weren't at the club last night."

"No. Heard a lecture."

"On what."

"'Husbands Who Are Never at Home,' by my wife."

"MAMMA," said three-year-old Flossie, "didn't Mrs. Jones say I got my eyes from you?"

"Yes, dear," was the reply.

"And did you used to have four eyes, mamma?" queried the little miss.

CLERK: "What do you wish, ma'am?"

Mrs. O'Flartye: "Oi want to sae some mirrors fit to give as a Christmas gift."

Clerk: "Hand mirrors?"

Mrs. O'Flartye: "No; some thot ye kin sae yer face in."

"THEY seem to be having a lot of accidents on these ocean steamers," said old Mrs. Spriggins, putting down the evening paper.

"What's happened now?" asked Spriggins.

"One of 'em's broke her record," said Mrs. Spriggins.

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Pretoria Coupon, S.S. *Jan. 27, 1900.*

Date.....

Name.....

Address.....

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Day..... *Hour*.....

(Pretoria Time).

We shall take it that competitors mean the year 1900 unless they state otherwise.

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Readers of SHORT STORIES may enter with this Coupon.

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When children meet at birthday and other parties, the hostess is naturally anxious to provide the most suitable and acceptable fare. Children do not require heavy meat food, yet they need variety, and the mother would do well to secure — among other appetising things—a supply of Chivers' Gold Medal Jellies. These excellent Jellies are refreshing and cooling and also nourishing. Chivers' Gold Medal Jellies are *flavoured with ripe fruit juices*, expressed by the firm themselves from the fresh fruit. Their sale and popularity are ever increasing. It is merit that does it all, the merit that takes pains to do the best. Children like Chivers' Jellies—there is no doubt about that. Put it to the vote where they have been used and the "Ayes" have it unanimously. The *Medical Press*, after careful analysis, says: "Chivers' Jellies are to be commended for the delicacy of their flavour and for their absolute purity. The *Woman's Signal* gives this testimony: "Chivers' Jellies can be confidently recommended, they are perfectly pure, absolutely clear and pleasant to look at on the table, and the flavour is simply perfect." The *Christian World* says: "In these village industries there is no room for deception. You must turn out a genuine article if you would defy competition, and this is why the firm in question are now at the top of the tree."

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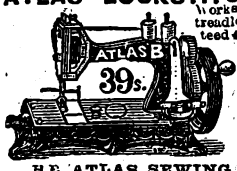

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The Brain Gymnasium.

ON this page, under the title, "The Brain Gymnasium," appear each week a series of puzzles calculated to occupy the attention of the competitors, with interest and profit to themselves, during the long winter evenings. Many of the tasks set will be comparatively easy of solution, while others will be designed with a view to taxing the abilities of the most proficient in this direction.

In these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the sender of the greatest number of correct solutions, and to the senders of the ten next highest number of c rrect ones will be presented either one of our silver pencil cases or a copy of a popular six-shilling novel.

Solutions must reach the Editor, SHORT STORIES, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by Monday, February 5th, 1900. Mark the envelope "Brain Gymnasium," and put the number of the competition of which the solution is sent at the top of the solution.

No. 21.

MY initials will form the name of a well-known Russian: "A planet," "a snare," "an animal," "a title," "a river," "a species of deer," "a reptile," and "a toy."

No. 22.

MY first two and my last two letters are the same. From my central letters words signifying "an animal," "a game," "origin," and "a grain," can be formed. My whole is bound to be taken before it can be given away.

No. 23.

R

C O N Q R O I S G L A N

A T O U E T H E N E N D

F O O F E I H S R V E R

R O U D A L A V E O N D

P E H T T L L E N R D I

COMMENCING at one of the outline letters, and proceeding in any direction except diagonally, trace out a well-known Shakesperian quotation.

No. 24.

S H F U R A R T I O I T C Y C

E O H I R E T N A K T C O H

RE-ARRANGE the above pairs of letters so that the two rows, read horizontally, will make a well-known proverb.

No. 25.

FORM one word by joining together a preposition, a pronoun, a personal pronoun, a preposition, a personal pronoun, and a preposition.

No. 26.

SORRY—RESENTED—LEND—LUNAR.

FORM the names of three well-known British artists with the letters of the four words given above.

No. 27.

BELOW are given the vowels, in the order used, of a well-known quotation from *Hamlet*. Insert the missing consonants.

I A O E A O I E O E E U E A I U O O

A E I E A O U A O E E A E O A Y A.

SOLUTIONS OF COMPETITIONS

Appearing in No. 575, Jan. 6th, 1900.

No. 7. Begin counting at No. 18.

No. 8. Re-act.

No. 9.

T
E
TE ET
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T

No. 10.

EVERYDO
GHASHIS
DAYANDE
VERYMAN
HISHOUR

No. 11. Each boy had five marbles.

Printed and Published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON, LTD., at Pearson's Weekly Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

"IT IS A BADGE OF COURAGE."

Mr. Millward says he got low-spirited. I don't wonder. If anything on the face of the earth will "take it out of" a man, that kind of experience may be depended on to do it.

It isn't that he was confined to his house for eleven weeks. That was dull enough, but no man with pluck and mental resources need let the mere monotony of it weigh heavily on his nerves. Not in this age and country anyway, with the comforts of home around him and the portable helps of civilisation to draw upon.

"There is no man," says an eminent medical authority, "to whom the grave seems so near and death so terrible as to the male adolescent dyspeptic. He runs the gamut of fancied disease, often selecting the most serious and the least likely. Every time his pulse flutters he is sure he has heart disease, and he thinks of an attack of vertigo as a warning of approaching insanity. Fears and anxieties gather about him like clouds over the setting sun, and his courage oozes out like that of an imaginative child who is obliged to pass a churchyard after dark. In short, the depressing influence of dyspepsia upon the mind is far in excess of the actual danger to strength or to life involved in the complaint itself."

All of which is true, and explains in good part our correspondent's low state of feeling. But (as all doctors know) the ailment called dyspepsia is dangerous as well as depressing. It does more than threaten and scold—*it hits hard enough to kill*. For dyspepsia, as its name implies, is a disease of the food system, and *that*, practically, includes every organ and function of the body. Therefore, almost any disease which carries men off may have been born in a languid stomach and reared to a vicious maturity amid the sloughs and poisons of chronic dyspepsia.

As for Mr. Millward, his was a common experience; there are so many millions exactly like it between Berwick and Dover.

"It was in the spring of 1893," he says, "that my health began to give way. My strength and energy appeared to lapse from me without any reason, so far as I could see. I had more or less pain and weight at the chest, especially after eating; and I ate little enough, as I had no appetite worth calling by that name. There was a vile taste in my mouth, and I was constantly spitting up phlegm and bitter stuff that came into my throat from my stomach. I noticed, too, that what I did eat did me no good—it did not strengthen me at all. In spite of all we could do, and the medicines I took, I got weaker and weaker, until I was compelled to give up my work, and, as you may put it, make a business of being ill.

"You can better understand how bad I was when I tell you that I was confined to the house for eleven weeks, continually taking medicines of one sort and another, and hoping some of them would help me out. It was a most miserable time, and I trust it will never happen to me again.

"While I was thus a prisoner at home, taking no pleasure or comfort in anything, my wife heard of Mother Seigel's Syrup, and insisted on my trying it. More to please her than because I had any confidence in it, I got a bottle from Mr. Johnson's, at Leek, and after taking it I was better—decidedly better—and easier. I went on using the Syrup, as you might suppose, and in a few weeks I was a well man—something I never expected to be. My natural strength came back, and I was out of the house and at work once more, to my own surprise and that of all who knew me. I shall require no urging to recommend Mother Seigel's Syrup every time I meet with anybody suffering from dyspepsia. It is a badge of courage. With my health I recovered my spirits and energy, and now enjoy my meals, my work, and good company."—Matthew Millward, Grindon, near Leek, Staffs.

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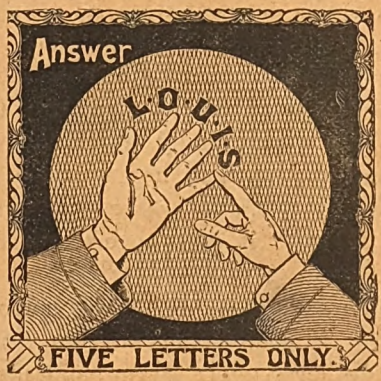

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 579. FOR WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 3RD, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

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SHORT STORIES

No 579.] [One Penny.

For the Week Ending February 3rd, 1900.

HOW THE VICOMTE WON HIS WIFE.

The Marquis de Rochemont and the Baron von Sternberg were deadly enemies, therefore it was the more unfortunate that Sternberg Castle should have been situated on a hill which overlooked the Chateau Rochemont. Some people thought that this very thing might be the cause of the ill-feeling which existed between them, and that the Marquis resented being looked down upon by a German baron, but then other people always do know so much more about one's private affairs than one does oneself.

The true cause of their enmity was to be found in a story which reached back two hundred years, when the great-grandfather of the Frenchman had been one of the favourite courtiers of the Grand Monarch, whilst the Baron's ancestor at the same period had followed the despicable calling of a paid spy, and being caught in the act of conveying some private correspondence of a compromising nature, (which had been stolen from Her Majesty's secretaire) Monsieur le Marquis had, to prevent any scandal, and at the Queen's request, killed him with his own hand.

This blot on his escutcheon the Baron could not forget, nor for the matter of that did the Marquis.

EDITED BY C. Arthur Pearson

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There were two ways of reaching Sternberg Castle, one wound up along the mountain side, the other and shorter route being through a forest and up a steep path. This latter however was never used by the Sternbergs, for the forest formed part of the Rochemont domain.

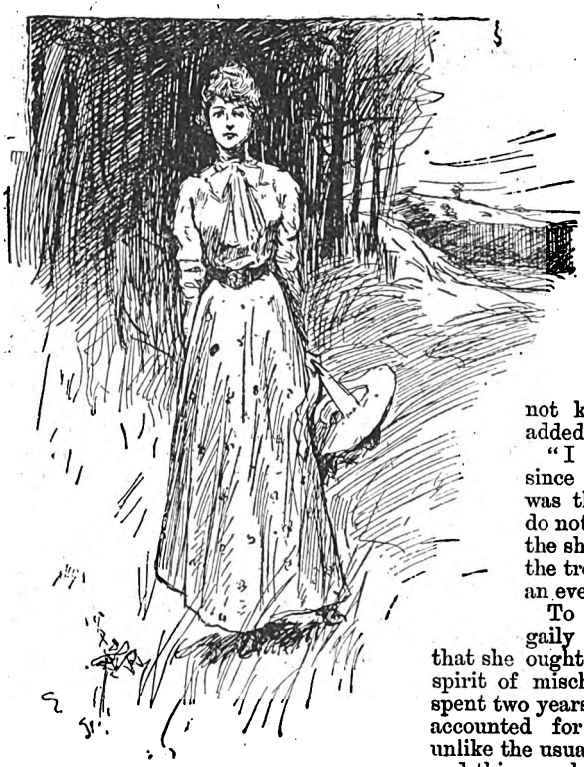
In one respect the Marquis and the Baron were alike, each had an only child, and as fate willed it, the Marquis had a son, whilst the German's family was represented by the Baroness Ernestine. Curiously enough, though such near neighbours, it chanced these two had never met, though now Henri was of age, and Ernestine had almost reached her eighteenth year.

The Marquis was a student by nature, never happy save when devouring musty records, and his ineptitude for business affairs had resulted in his being greatly imposed upon.

Henri de Beauville had just reached home after a tour round the world, found that his father's property needed a master's eye, and was wondering whether he could ever bear the monotony of living ten months in the year at Rochemont, as he lay one day, soon after his return, under one of the pine trees in the forest.

Whilst thus brooding, he heard a sound which made him start; it was a woman's voice, a pure soprano singing "Elizabeth's Song of Greeting" out of *Tannhäuser*.

Now Henri was devoted to music, and in his many travels he missed few opportunities of attending any of the great opera houses, yet he was fain to acknowledge that never before had he heard Wagner so exquisitely rendered, as by this unknown stranger. He almost feared to breathe lest the spell should be broken.



Presently the singer came into view.

Presently the singer came into view; she was a tall, slender girl with wonderful golden hair and eyes which looked from under dark lashes with the far-away gaze of one inspired. From whence had she come, this stranger, and how could he attract her notice? Hardly had this thought come into his mind, than Fortune seemed to favour him, for at that moment she stumbled against a root in the path and fell. He darted forward and lifted her from the ground. She started violently and appeared filled with terror, then with the quick reaction of a child gave vent to a peal of laughter, which was if possible more bewitching than her song.

As she freed herself from his arms and quickly recovered her composure, she asked to whom she was indebted for the timely aid she had received.

"Henri de Beauville at your service," answered the young Vicomte. At these apparently harmless words Henri was distressed to see another startled look in those wonderful eyes.

"Ah, it is clear you do not know who I am, or you would not have aided me so kindly, Vicomte. I am Ernestine von Sternberg, the daughter of your father's enemy."

"Impossible!" ejaculated the young man horror-struck, for with the impulsiveness of youth he had already made up his mind that this was the one woman in the world for him, yet the family feud—bah! he cared not, these things could not last for ever. And after all only the two families knew of the skeleton in the Sternberg cupboard, so quickly recovering himself, he added:

"Baroness, now that I know your name, let me repeat that now and ever I am at your service."

Ernestine laughingly gave him her hand, which he raised to his lips with all the grace of a scion of generations of courtiers. For her part she was charmed at this encounter, she had so often heard of the Vicomte, but never imagined him like this, why, he was more like an Englishman if it had not been for his manners.

"I shall not dare to tell my father that I have seen you," she went on, "he has forbidden me ever to enter the wood, but it looked so cool and inviting this hot afternoon, and indeed I did not know you were home," she added playfully.

"I am very glad you did not, since it has led to our meeting," was the grave reply, "but please do not let me drive you away from the shade, or I shall feel that I am the trespasser. Let me show you an even cooler retreat."

To this engaging invitation she gaily acquiesced, her conviction that she ought not to, being overcome by a spirit of mischief. He found that she had spent two years at an English school, which accounted for her natural manners, so unlike the usual primness of German girls, and this gave her an added charm in his eyes.

Indeed they found they had so many things to talk about, that it was an hour later when they parted, not however before Henri had begged Ernestine not to discontinue her walks on his account.

She went off with a merry twinkle in her blue eyes, muttering to herself what sounded very like, "Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?" but of this Henri could not be sure.

When he reached the Chateau, he acquainted his father with his intention of giving up travelling for the present at any rate, and settling down to overhaul the estate.

The Marquis was delighted, and after thanking him, added:

"Henri, my boy, you must marry, for remember the hopes of the House of Rochemont centre upon you."

"Well, father, what do you say to my calling on the Baron von Sternberg, and asking for his daughter's hand? The two properties would go well together," suggested Henri.

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"Henri de Beauville, your jest is misplaced, for you know that never will a living Sternberg come under my roof. A Rochemont mates not with the descendant of a spy," and the old man's voice shook with anger.

This showed the Vicomte pretty plainly that should he in time be able to win Ernestine, stratagem would have to be exercised in order that his father might recognize the marriage.

In spite of their dread that their respective parents might discover their movements, and perhaps on Ernestine's side because of the added zest it gave, the young people continued to meet in the wood daily, until the time arrived that Henri felt he could no longer hold his peace, but must proclaim his love.

So it came to pass that one September afternoon, about three weeks from the day they first met, as they wandered through the woods side by side, Henri poured out his love for her, and asked her to become his wife. Very handsome he looked as he stood there before her, the last gleams of the sun playing on his fair hair, and silhouetting the manly form against the dark green of the forest trees. So at least thought Ernestine, as she listened to his passionate words. There was a pause and then the girl looked up, right into her lover's eyes, and let him read his answer in her own, and after that there was for a space, a silence too eloquent for words.

"Henri," at last said Ernestine, looking up again, "I can never tell my father, he would never forgive me, and nothing would make him consent to our marriage. Why he is so bitter against your family I cannot think, and he will never tell me."

"Quite right of him darling, it's an old story dating back two hundred years, surely it has lived in the memory of the two houses long enough. But, dear heart, I am not one whit better off than you are, for my father has vowed that never shall the Baroness Ernestine von Sternberg cross his threshold alive," added Henri ruefully.

"What are we to do then? Ah! Henri, I cannot bid you farewell, my love, for you are part of my very existence," and the girl nestled closer in his arms.

"My little sweetheart, do you think that I will let all the fathers in the world come between us? No, indeed, we must bring diplomacy to bear upon the case. Listen!" and he unfolded to her the elaborate plan he had thought out during the last few days, when he hardly yet dared to hope that he might win her love.

"It is a great thing to ask of you, darling, but I think it is the only plan by which my father can be induced to recognise you as my wife. Are you brave enough to try?"

"Henri, I love you," was the girl's only reply.

Apparently the Vicomte found it a satisfactory one, for they agreed to carry out their scheme a few days later, when the two friends he had summoned to Rochemont should have arrived.

So they parted with a last farewell till the next evening should come, when Henri would meet her to tell her further of the plot he proposed and to make the final arrangements.

L'Abbé Beaupaire had formerly been a tutor of the Vicomte's, and loved him dearly, so that when the letter from Henri reached him asking for his help and a visit to the château, he immediately repaired thither with all speed.

As to his other friend, Edward Cary, the young doctor was delighted at the prospect of staying at an old French château, and renewing his friendship with Henri

As they wandered through the wood side by side, Henri poured out his love for her.

de Beauville, in whose company he had passed many a pleasant hour in London. M. le Marquis welcomed his son's friends with his own courtly grace, and then begged them to excuse him for that evening as he was in the midst of a translation of the Assyrian inscription on a tablet recently brought him from the East.

Nothing could have been better. The Vicomte explained how matters stood between himself and Ernestine, and entreated his friends' aid in carrying out his plot.

The Abbé listened gravely, asking a question in his keen way at such times as the plan seemed too involved, whilst the younger man waited for him to speak first.

"Henri, my son, is this lady a good Catholic?"

"Surely you know had she not been, my father, I had not dared ask you here to marry us," replied the Vicomte with a smile.

"It is well, and surely to heal this feud would be a good deed," said the priest thoughtfully, as he looked up at this eager boy. "Yes," he said at last, "I am willing to play my part in this ghastly farce, but what says our friend here?" and he turned towards the Englishman.

"Henri, old man," answered the Doctor, "I like your spirit, and will declare you mad till I am black in the face, since that seems to be the part assigned to me. But the Baroness, who will prepare her for her weird betrothal?"

"You and I between us, Ted. Have you any drug, which will to all appearance render her dead for the space of half an hour?"

"Yes I have, and luckily it happens to be in the

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medicine chest I always carry about with me. But won't the lady object to a stranger experimenting on her?"

"Not when that stranger happens to be my friend. Beside, she approves of my plan, and places herself entirely in our hands, darling that she is," added the Vicomte fervently.

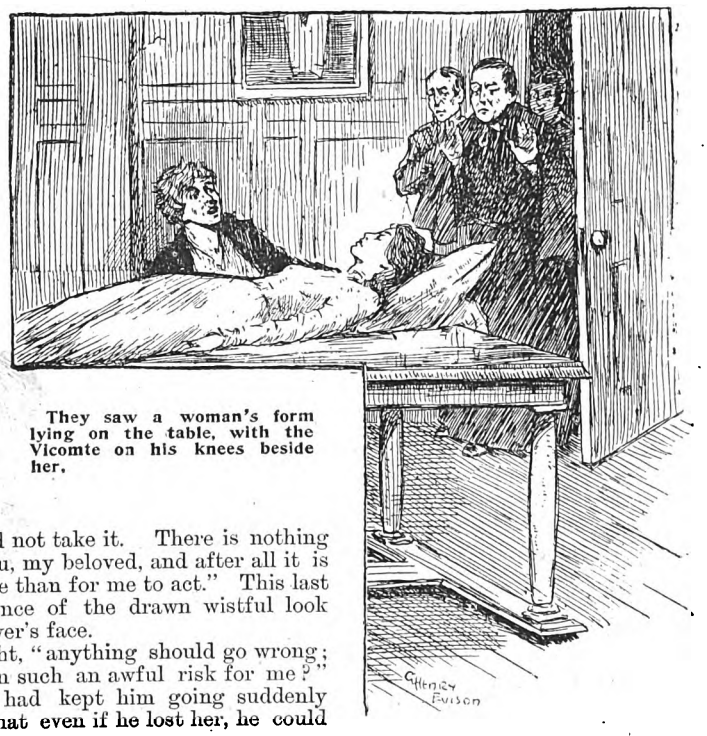
So it chanced that two days later, the Vicomte and his English guest shouldered their guns and went into the forest.

There they were met by the Baroness, looking lovelier than ever in a dress of the finest white embroidered muslin, confined at her waist by a belt of solid silver, made like a curb chain. She was paler than was her wont, the tension of what she was about to do, having told upon her nerves.

When Henri introduced her to Edward Cary, that gentleman came to the conclusion that his friend had shown uncommonly good taste in his selection of the future Marquise.

After the greeting was over, Edward and the Abbé, who had joined them, discreetly walked on, leaving the two lovers together.

"Henri, is there really no other way?" the girl asked anxiously. "But no, if there were I could not take it. There is nothing I would not dare for you, my beloved, and after all it is far harder for you to see than for me to act." This last she added in consequence of the drawn wistful look which came over her lover's face.



They saw a woman's form lying on the table, with the Vicomte on his knees beside her.

"Suppose," he thought, "anything should go wrong; can I really let her run such an awful risk for me?" The excitement which had kept him going suddenly collapsed, and he felt that even if he lost her, he could not carry out his plan.

As his courage failed, hers, with true womanliness, rose, and calling to his friends she asked that the last explanations and instructions might be given her, and the attempt made as soon as possible. In vain did Henri protest, she motioned to Dr. Cary to take no notice of him, but to proceed with what he was saying.

"We will take great care of you, Baroness. It's awfully plucky of you, I think," ended Edward, after he had made it all plain.

"Thank you, Mr. Cary, I feel sure I can trust you," replied the girl, then turning with a bright smile to her betrothed, she added "I am quite ready to be taken off by force now, if M. L'Abbé will get out of sight, but remain in earshot." The Abbé bowed and withdrew further into the wood, whilst Ted Cary murmured in low tones:

"Please, Baroness, remember that once you pass the château gates, your heart fails and you die. I shall inject the drug the moment we put you down, and the effects will last exactly half-an-hour."

Henri now besought the girl to fly with him, and on her answering with a decided negative, he motioned to his friend, and advanced to carry her off by force. In the struggle Henri's gun went off, giving him a slight flesh wound, then Edward stooped over the girl, and bound a handkerchief round her wrists, whilst the Vicomte lifted her in his arms despite her struggles and cries for aid.

No sooner had they got inside the château, than Henri having deposited his prisoner on a table, the doctor proceeded to inject the fluid, which in five minutes produced a rigidity indistinguishable from death.

Henri meantime had been divesting himself of his collar and tie, rumpling his hair, and altogether assuming the appearance of one distraught with grief.

In response to his cries and groans footsteps began to be heard, and as had been arranged the Abbé, accompanied by two servants, hurried into the room. All three held up their hands in horror as they saw a woman's form lying stark and stiff on the table, with the Vicomte on his knees beside her apparently out of his mind.

"My son, what has happened, what are you doing?" asked the priest, then as Henri vouchsafed no reply, save a groan, he turned to the Englishman for an explanation.

"Our friend has lost his heart to this lady, and meeting her in the wood, tried to persuade her to marry him, and on her refusal he seemed to lose his head, and nothing I could say or do would prevent his lifting her up in his arms and carrying her off here by force. Now, poor fellow, as you can see he is frantic, for the shock has proved too much for the girl's heart, and he has killed the one he loved best in the world."

The Abbé could scarcely speak for emotion, but inquired if they knew who the lady was.

They answered in the negative.

"Then we must let the body remain in the large hall till we have made inquiries," said the Abbé.

With great difficulty they made the Vicomte understand that they were not going to separate him from his beautiful victim for the present. The servants approached to raise the body, but their master waived them aside angrily, only consenting to let Edward help him with his sad burden.

Tenderly they bore the rigid body of the girl to the hall, a priest going to tell the Marquis of the tragedy.

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They laid the fair form on a sofa, and it was thus the Marquis saw it as he followed the Abbé. Henri was crouched down on the floor beside it, muttering "Death shall not rob me of you, you *shall* be my bride, you *shall* I say."

Edward Cary stood looking on for some minutes, and then crossed over to where the Marquis was standing, and told him that he feared his son's reason would be permanently lost if his strange whim was not humoured. The old man turned helplessly to the Abbé.

"Monsieur is right, my friend. With your consent I will ease Henri's mind, by reading the marriage service over him and this lady."

"Yes, yes," cried the heartbroken father, "anything to comfort my poor boy."

The Abbé raised Henri from beside the apparent corpse, and explained to him in low tones that he would marry him as he desired, but that they did not know the girl's name.

"Ernestine von Sternberg," came the startling reply.

The Marquis made a gesture of dissent, but was soothed into acquiescence by Edward Cary, and the weird ceremonial began.

There was a pause whilst the Marquis pulled off his late wife's wedding ring from his finger, and gave it with trembling hand to the Abbé.

The doctor perceiving signs of returning animation, made a sign to the priest to get on with the service. Scarcely had Henri spoken the words making her his wife, than Ernestine's eyes opened and rested on his face. His appearance seemed to revive her memory, for when the Abbé addressed the question to her, whether she would take Henri de Beauville to be her wedded husband all the company present, excepting those who were in the secret, were electrified by hearing a faint "I will" come from her they had until that moment believed to be gone past recall. Henri slipped the ring on to her finger, and the Abbé without a moment's pause, pronounced them man and wife, before the Marquis had recovered from his astonishment sufficiently to interfere.

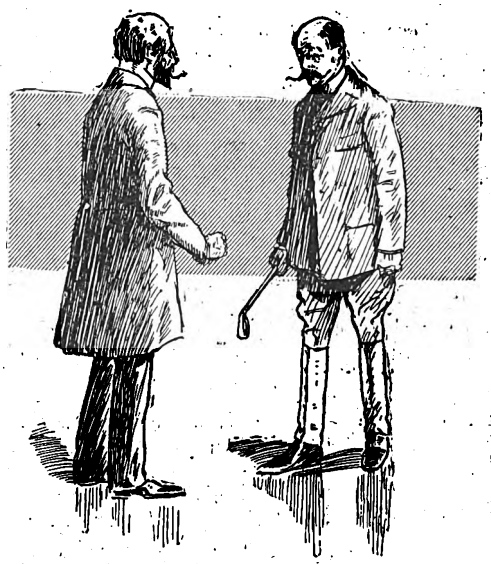
Henri still remained kneeling by her side, with a semi-dazed expression. Now the deed was done his mind seemed hardly able to grasp the fact that the great stake was over, and Ernestine indeed his wife. The girl herself was the first to recover.

"Henri," she whispered, "is it really all over, and am I indeed your wife?"

For all answer he took her in his arms, and held her there before them all. "Father," he cried, "do not be angry with me. I love Ernestine with all my heart, and could marry no other woman, but you told me she should never enter your doors alive, so we were forced to fall back upon stratagem, and now, my father, let me present you to Madame la Vicomtesse de Beauville."

For an instant the old man hesitated, then as the girl knelt at his feet in her pure white bridal robe that matched the colour of her face, he raised her gently, and taking her in his arms kissed her on the forehead, afterwards turning to his son with outstretched hand, and a smile on his proud old face, saying, "Henri, my son, I forgive you, I once was young myself, and know full well that I should have lost my heart to Madame la Vicomtesse, had I chanced to meet her then,"—this with a courtly bow to Ernestine.

"Ah, father, you are too good to us," rejoined the young man gratefully, "and you, my friends, how can I thank you for the help you gave us."



"M. le Marquis, it shall be as you wish."

A few moments later the great bell resounded through the chateau, and who should be standing outside but the Baron von Sternberg himself. Someone had seen his daughter go down to the forest, and heard the scuffle, then creeping to where the sound came from, had seen the girl carried off by force, and had fled up to the castle to carry the news.

The Marquis, taking his daughter-in-law by the hand led her to the furious Baron, who mindful only of the fact that she was alive and unhurt, clasped her to his bosom again and again.

As soon as she could speak, Ernestine turned towards her husband, and beckoned him to her side.

"Father, let me introduce you to your son."

"To my what?" exclaimed the Baron.

"Permit me to explain," here interposed the Marquis. "Both you and I, Baron, have been fairly tricked by these two young people, who it seems fell in love with each other, but since they are now united by Holy Church, as M. l'Abbé will testify, shall we not bury the hatchet of which only you, myself and my son have cognisance, and for the future strive only in friendly rivalry as to which is the more important, the perfecting of scientific discoveries, or the deciphering of ancient tablets?" for the Baron was well known in scientific circles.

Henri here put in his word.

"Father," and the bewildered Baron started at hearing such a title fall from the Vicomte's lips addressed to him. "Father, you have gained a son as well as kept a daughter, if you will have it so."

"I don't seem to have any choice left," answered Von Sternberg at length, half grimly, then turning to the Marquis he extended his hand, adding:

"M. Le Marquis, it shall be as you wish, and indeed I am sensible of the honour you have conferred on me."

"And now, gentleman, what think you of a rubber of whist, while Henri and his wife have time to talk over these wonderful events, and congratulate themselves on ending a feud which has lasted already far too long," replied the Marquis.

M. Hoey.

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A CRIMINAL BARRISTER.

THIS story, in the main, is appropriated; having been published some thirty years ago. But, before branding me with the odious crime of plagiarism, I would ask the reader to hear the story to the end. Then, should he consider me deserving, let him apply the brand, burning the mark deeply, that others may avoid me in future. I shall, however, feel amply repaid, whatever the public judgment, for having been the means of giving to the world for the first time the true facts in one of the most interesting criminal cases that ever came before the courts, the *dénouement* to which reveals an instance of resort to the lowest depths of duplicity and perfidy in the history of crime, involving the character of one whose name was almost a household word, and whose career is cited, even to this day, as one representing all that is exemplary in that which constitutes a life of integrity, honesty and uprightness of character.

The story as it first appeared was entitled; "A Criminal Barrister; or, the Beginning of a Successful Career." Just why the author should have made use of the words "A Criminal Barrister," always remained a mystery to me, as the title could in no general way be considered appropriate to the tale. But the reading between the lines stood out like a revelation when I came into possession of the key. The story is given here, somewhat abbreviated, but the main facts are as originally written.

* * * * *

On March 13th, 1855, there was added to the large list of barrister's names outside No. 10 Pump Handle Court, that of "J. A. Baldwin," and thus marked the beginning of my legal career.

Several months passed, during which time I had not secured a single case in the courts. I began seriously to doubt the wisdom of my having chosen the law as a profession, when, as is often the case, the unexpected happened and my opportunity came.

One night in a town in Kent, which shall be nameless, a policeman heard a woman's scream in the vicinity of an archway for foot passengers only, under the railway, which here was very broad. Hastening in the direction of the alarm, the officer found near the entrance of the archway, a young man, kneeling over the prostrate form of a young woman. As he came up to them he heard the young man utter in an undertone these words:

"Oh, Helen, how I loved you, and how often you have spurned that love; but your lips will never say those cruel words again."

The woman was found to be dead and the man was arrested, charged with her murder.

The young man proved to be my old friend, George Grier. We had been at the University together and occupied adjacent rooms for over three years. I knew that Grier was innocent—utterly incapable of such a brutal, cowardly crime. Circumstances were overwhelming against him, however, but I resolved when I was asked to act in his defence to save him from paying the penalty of a crime with which he was charged.

I set to work upon the case without a shred of evidence as to his innocence, save the general good character he had always borne, and my absolute knowledge of his utter incapability of the crime.

At the coroner's inquest the following facts bearing upon the case were elicited. The woman had died instantly—the condition of the blood proving this. On the right side of the head and directly over the ear was a contusion, the result, apparently, of a blow from some blunt instrument. The body had not been robbed or otherwise disturbed and was still warm and limp when found by the policeman. Grier had been known to have sought the young lady's company, but had not been favourably received. They had quarrelled the same evening that the tragedy occurred.

Grier had been seen by a railway ganger, who recognised him, to enter the archway from the upper side a few minutes before the young woman passed through. There had been no one else seen near the spot for some little time.

The officer who effected the arrest testified as to the manner in which he discovered the crime, and the facts as previously related. He also produced a loaded cane which Grier acknowledged belonged to him and which he had carried with him at the time he was arrested. The head of the cane, it was shown, would doubtless produce just such a contusion as that found on the head of the dead woman, if used with sufficient force.

Grier acknowledged that he and the young woman had had a misunderstanding that evening, and had parted with angry words. This, he stated, also accounted for his passing through the archway alone that evening. He had always made it a practice to accompany the young woman when she was late returning home, but as their disagreement would not admit of it on this occasion, he had preceded her to the archway and waited in the vicinity until he should see that she had passed safely through.

Passing through to the lower side, he had sat down upon some planks which were lying near. While sitting there he was startled by hearing a woman scream in the archway. Suspecting it to be her for whom he was waiting, he ran to the entrance and at the same moment the young lady came running out and fell at his feet.

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Thinking at first that she had swooned he had tried to restore her to consciousness, but failing in this, he had just discovered that she was dead when the officer came up. His grief at the sad discovery accounted for the words he uttered, which the officer had overheard.

The evidence produced was considered sufficient, however, and Grier was committed for trial to the assizes charged with the murder of the young woman. The trial was set down for October 15th, which left but two weeks in which to secure evidence and prepare my case.

During those two weeks I made frequent visits to the scene of the tragedy and held many consultations with my friend Grier as well as with his solicitor.

As a result of my investigations I went quietly to the office of the county analyst on the day preceding the trial, and taking him with me, went to the coroner's office. Here I related the results of my investigations, and after a consultation upon the matter, the remains of the dead girl, which had been placed in the public morturay pending the trial, were quietly examined, and an affidavit stating the results of this examination signed by the county analyst and the coroner, placed in my hands.

On the following day at the hour set for the trial the court-room was packed with eager spectators, anxious to know the out-come, as the case was completely shrouded in mystery. Scarcely a person in the entire court-room believed Grier guilty; yet the evidence was so strongly against him that no one could see how he could be acquitted.

The witnesses for the prosecution corroborated the evidence produced at the coroner's inquest, and wove a chain of circumstantial evidence about Grier which seemed certain to place his head in the hangman's noose. As the witnesses were turned over, one by one, to me for cross-examination, they were asked but one question:

"Do you know of anything derogatory to the character of the accused, prior to this charge having been made against him?"

The answers to this question were all to the effect of proving that Grier enjoyed an unblemished character. But the spectators began to grow nervous at this apparent lack of effort upon my part to break the chain of evidence which was gradually being forged about him, and were chafiing under the intense suspense.

At last the evidence for the prosecution was concluded and the time of the defence came to produce their witnesses. I rose, and facing the judge, stated with a feeling of intense earnestness and solemnity:

"My Lord, and Gentlemen of the Jury:

"The defence has no witnesses, save Him who witnesseth all things and judgeth all things."

As I sat down the hum of excitement rose to a clamour; the people in the court-room climbed up in their seats and pushed and jostled one another in their efforts to get a little nearer the dramatic scene.

Order being restored, the counsel for the prosecution rose and began his speech. Evidently thinking he had it all his own way, and that through my inexperience or lack of confidence I feared to make an effort in the face of the strong case of circumstantial evidence he had produced, his address was but a short one.

When he had finished I rose and told the story that had been burning in my heart for many days.

"My Lord and Gentlemen of the Jury:

"Before you is a young man charged with the murder of a young woman, for whom he would have willingly yielded up his life to save from harm. Even now he stands in the shadow of the gallows whose cruel noose the prosecution would gladly tighten round his neck for a crime of which he is as innocent as the prattling babe at its mother's breast, and of which not one word of evidence has been produced to prove him guilty.

"True, they will tell you that it is circumstantial evidence; yea, evidence which is no evidence at all. Oh, humanity, whence art thou fled? When will men learn to be human? Is it meet that we should barter away a human soul upon the narrow shreds of supposition? Were it not that I have been intimately associated with this young man for many years and know him wholly incapable of the fiendish crime he is charged with, and knowing this, have laboured almost day and night since his arrest to thwart the design of those who would place the noose about his neck, his life would this day doubtless have been bartered into eternity without a twinge of compunction.

"But I thank Heaven that the facts have come into my possession which will save the life of an innocent man and spare the country the ignominy and disgrace of that most heinous crime—legal murder.

"On that memorable night when the tragedy occurred which resulted in the death of Helen Vance and the arrest of the accused before you, two lovers had had a misunderstanding. The young lady had to pass through a lonely archway at a late hour and the young man who had, previous to the quarrel, always accompanied her through this archway, because he wished to protect her from possible harm, passes through it a few minutes before the usual time for her to do so and awaits in the vicinity until she shall pass through in safety.

"A few minutes later, she enters the archway from the upper side. Being alone and the archway dark and lonely, she naturally feels timid. As she hastens through she suddenly hears footsteps following her. She screams and runs out, only to see in the dim light afforded by the gas lamp, another man rush at her from the opposite direction.

"She faints and falls to the ground. Her head strikes a sharp cobble stone and makes a contusion.

"A miniature sword which she wears as an ornament in her hat, pierces her temple, breaking off close to the skull and under the skin, which quickly closes over the puncture, leaving no tell-tale mark to show its location. The steps she heard following her in the archway, were but an echo of her own, which can be proven to anyone wishing to visit the archway and make the test. The man whom she saw as she emerged was her friend, the prisoner at the bar, who was hastening to her aid in response to her scream of terror. Here is the hilt of the little sword hat-pin, which I found firmly embedded between the cobble stones where she fell, and which has been identified by several of the dead girl's friends; and here is an affidavit, signed by the county analyst and the coroner, under date of yesterday, telling you, Gentlemen of the Jury, that if you will go to the mortuary where the casket containing the remains of the dead girl now lies, you may see the other portion of this sword firmly embedded in the temple of the corpse, a mute but indisputable witness to the fact that Helen Vance met her death by accident.

"If she had been struck on the head by a loaded cane, as claimed by the prosecution, she would have fallen upon the left side, the blow having been struck upon the right where the contusion was found, and there would have been marks on the left side to show where the head struck the rough cobble stones. On the contrary, the

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body when found was lying upon the right side, where both the contusion and the embedded hat-pin are to be found.

"In conclusion, my Lord and gentlemen of the jury, I wish to reiterate that not a single word of direct evidence has been produced to convict the prisoner at the bar of the murder of Helen Vance, and consequently there remains nothing for you to do but acquit him of the charge."

Amid thunderous applause I stepped up to the judge and handed him the affidavit and the broken hilt of the miniature sword. After examining both carefully for a few moments, the counsel for the prosecution was asked to close his case.

Rising to his feet the counsel stated that the prosecution was ready to let the case go to the jury as it stood. The judge instructed the jury in a few brief words, reminding them that they were to render their verdict in accordance with the facts given in evidence.

The twelve men filed into the jury room like so many grim and silent spectres. Five minutes later they returned, and upon being asked by the judge what verdict they wished to render, replied:

"Not guilty."

Amid a clamour that it was impossible to subdue, Grier was told he was a free man.

Thus ended the dramatic proceedings of my first case. Friends and strangers alike crowded about me and my friend Grier, and offered warm words of congratulation. From that day the star of my legal career was ever in the ascendant; and not many years later I found myself occupying the judge's bench in the same court where I won my first laurels.

* * * * *

This, in brief, is the story as told by Mr. Justice Baldwin some thirty years ago. But ah, what a different story reads between the lines.

During the last fifteen years of the judge's life I was his private secretary, and as such gained much information that led me to suspect that he held some secret which weighed heavily upon his mind. From ill health he was compelled to give up the bench while yet a comparatively young man. Having never married, the judge had no family to look after his personal wants, and as he grew more feeble my duties partook largely of the nature of body servant.

His mind grew weak and he would frequently wander in his thoughts, dropping fragments of strange speech now and then concerning his past, which I felt it would be wrong to encourage him to divulge, considering the weak state of his mind.

One morning some ten years ago as I entered his room, I found him sitting stark and stiff in his chair, his eyes wide open and staring fixedly at the ceiling. About him, scattered upon the floor, were the fragments of a photograph, which I found by placing the pieces together, to be that of Grier, the friend of his youth. On a small table at his side was an empty phial labelled "Prussic Acid." Beside it lay a slip of paper with these words written across it in a straggling, scrawling hand:

"Thus ends the last chapter of a Criminal Barrister." The word "Criminal" was heavily underscored in a manner strangely suggestive.

In his will he left all his property and personal effects to me, and with the will was a sealed package with instructions that it was not to be opened until five years after his death.

The five years have passed, and with them another five. The contents of that strange package have haunted my life and I have at last determined to give them to the world and thus unburden my mind of a secret that is weighing my own life down.

It was a confession, pitiful in its hopelessness, sad in its bitterness of repentance, of the double crime of shielding a known murderer from the punishment which he so richly deserved, for the purpose of furthering his own interests by making a reputation for himself.

It reviewed the history of Grier's case, stating that Grier had confessed to him that he murdered Helen Vance out of revenge for her having jilted him; that he waylaid her at the archway, and when she appeared, struck her with the loaded cane, and then to cover up his crime, drove the miniature sword into her temple, broke it off and placed the hilt between the cobble stones in a manner to make it appear she had fallen upon it; that together they had planned the whole dramatic plot, which by the power of a cunningly devised case of circumstantial evidence, cleared Grier and won a fame for himself that hung about his neck as a millstone and kindled a fire of remorse within his heart that had burned up his life with the fury of a thousand demons.

The document was signed:

"Jas. A. Baldwin,
"Criminal Barrister."

K. N. Vernon.

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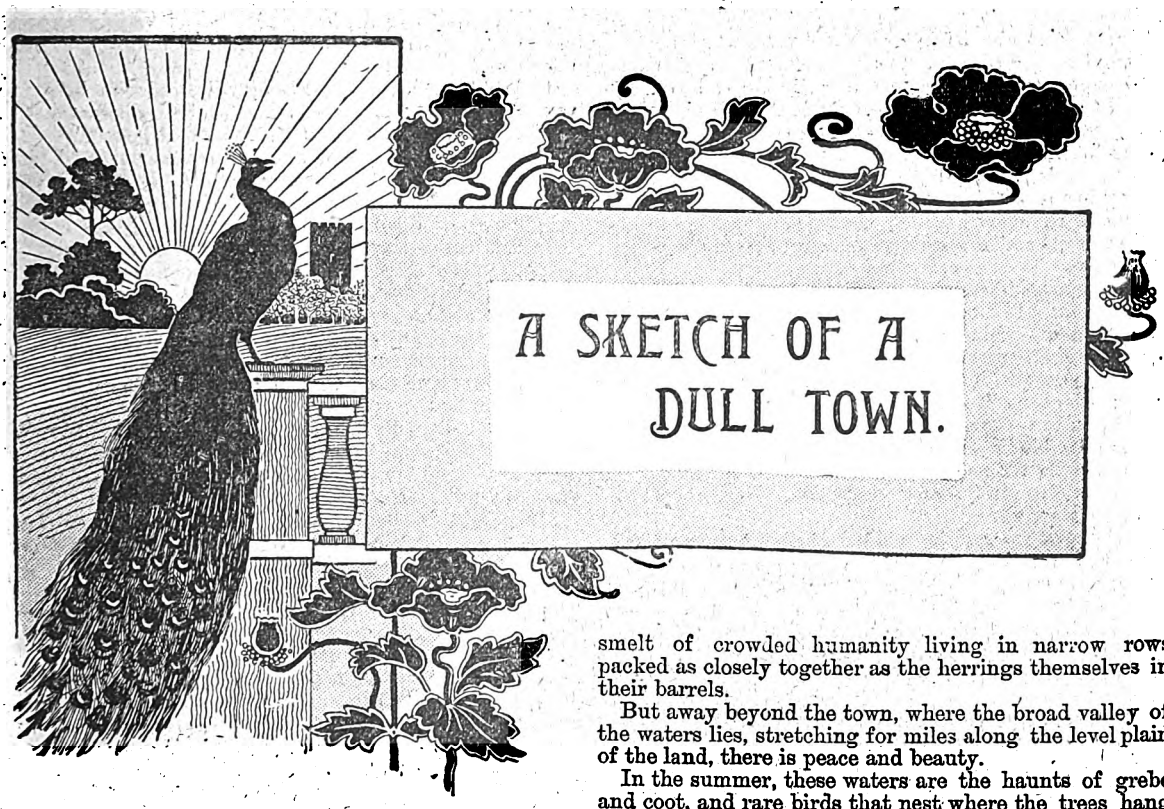

A SKETCH OF A DULL TOWN.

It was November weather, and the streets of Yawdon were standing in dense puddles of wet, that shivered as the black North-easter struck their surface, driving up the exposed level of the town.

The wind whipping the faces of the passers-by, shrieked out to its victims the meaning of winter time in England, mocking them for their inability to take wing for the sun-kissed shores of the Mediterranean, where the North-easter never blows.

If it had not been for the great fishing industry that absorbed the whole of Yawdon town, the place might well have been described in the caustic language of the porter at the Albert Docks, whose tongue is as graphic as his contempt of the place is keen.

"Lor', this yere place, was you a saying? Why it was a second thought of Mrs. Nature, when she fancied as the Thames was too cheerful looking.

"Do I like living here? Well, I don't know as how I do, leastways I ain't never bothered with folks stravaging round inquiring for houses or lodgings.

"You should have seen a gent off one of these yere P. & O. boats as got left here by mistake. Lor'! you'd a thought as I had exploded a quick match under his feet when the train came in at last, after he'd eaten all the sandwiches at the inn, and smoked his last cigar, and had nothin' to do but sit and look at the Docks."

People drifted to Yawdon sometimes, but the charity of the place was so overwhelming, that until their neighbours had grown entirely accustomed to them; the aliens were always furtively considered either to be given over to intemperance, or to be on the verge of bankruptcy—and were treated accordingly.

The town was not famous for its beauty, being of a dull red colour, with a uniform taste in the shape of its houses. And the streets that did not reek of herrings, smelt of crowded humanity living in narrow rows packed as closely together as the herrings themselves in their barrels.

But away beyond the town, where the broad valley of the waters lies, stretching for miles along the level plain of the land, there is peace and beauty.

In the summer, these waters are the haunts of grebe and coot, and rare birds that nest where the trees hang low down to the hedges of the Broads, and whisper to the bright-eyed water rats on the bank, till the whirr of a steam launch, or the shriek of a boat-load of yelling humanity from the East-end of London, sets the senses of nature jarring.

But those Broads in the winter, under the flame of the sunset sky, with the crisp touch of frost upon the naked trees; the sharp etched body of an heron cleaving its heavy flight across the mere, are a very world of loneliness.

The shiver of the reeds, the scrape of the brown branches against each other; the whistle of the wind in the sedges, are scarcely broken by the advent now and again of a slow moving barge, with bellying red sail—or the call of some woman from the bank, as she summons home the cows from the lowlying pastures.

Once there drifted to Yawdon, on the wings of circumstance or fate, a woman.

She took up her abode quietly, at the extreme end of a street that was frankly uninteresting.

Since it seemed at first that she matched the street, no one troubled themselves about her in any way. She was merely an atom of society wreckage, unprofitable to Yawdon.

In course of time, the loneliness of her life, and the constant companionship of a sorrow that was eating out her heart, drove her mad.

Discovering this, the boys of the town, filled with all the sympathy of a certain class of childhood for affliction wrecked the front of her house with well-aimed bullets of stones and mud.

Seeing that she was the centre of a persecution that did not seem likely to come to an end, she made a barricade for herself of soap boxes and matchwood, plastering up doors and windows, in the front of the cottage, with

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such mortar as she could procure from the road scrapings. And from thence forward she took refuge in the attics.

The sight of this extraordinary fortress, naturally lowered the rents in Murchiston Road, and several of its inhabitants, who had never known what it was to have lunatics in their own families, left for saner climes.

In the fine weather, Mrs. Longford could be seen walking in her little garden clad in a scarlet wrapper, carrying a tin shovel which she wielded as a weapon of defence in case of a sudden onslaught from the youth of Yawdon.

Sometimes she coaxed the little children into her gate—for she was harmless, and none had reason to fear her—and made them a feast on the lawn consisting of a pound of sugar, eaten out of a rare Worcester bowl, with a silver spoon, fashioned like a stork.

She spoke sometimes, but her voice was harsh, and she seemed to be always seeking for words that might express the blank misery of her eyes. But the little children of Yawdon loved her, for they alone had seen what those two attic rooms contained, store houses of secrets as they were.

Once one of the babies babbled to its mother of the toys that hung on the walls, of the whip and the rocking horse, the suit of boys clothes always kept brushed for use upon the chair, of the picture of the child above the bed, with the yellow hair and bright beautiful face.

And that happy mother, recognising a tragedy in the child's innocent story, sent her little Alsie, with a cake and a pot of jam to the barricaded house, a gift that woke the first smile in the desolate face that had rested there for many weary years.

Soldiers are not regarded with particular favour in Yawdon, especially by that particularly respectable portion of society that dwells in Murchiston Road.

But since there was a depôt in the town, Tommy Atkins was looked upon as a necessary evil, and a source of some profit to the ratepayers, though at the same time, naturally, an object of contempt.

Therefore it chanced that when a gunner in full uniform drifted up the road, it behoved everyone to turn out to look at such an unusual sight.

He must have some interest in the place, seeing that he was scanning each particular house with puzzled keenness. And immediately every dovecote was fluttered to discover what particular family owned its skeleton in the cupboard in the shape of a soldier son.

It is of course far more respectable to weigh out sugar and tea over a counter, or to drive a tram through wet or shine, than to be compelled to wear a coat that is suggestive of the poorhouse, since it is given as one may say in charity by the country, and is similar to that worn by hundreds of other men.

And therefore when the soldier pulled up with a jerk at the barricaded house of Mrs. Longford, it was with a sigh of relief that the inhabitants of Murchiston Road realised that no further indignity awaited any of the members of their select coterie.

He looked up the street and down, referred to a piece of paper that he held in his hand, scratched his head and shook it, as his eyes fell upon the barricade of soap boxes that covered the exterior of the house at the end of the street.

No doubt the condition of siege, aroused in his mind recollections of temporary fortifications, erected by the Sappers on field days, but they failed to stir the chord of memory connected with his mother, of whom he was in search.

One of the neighbours was ostentatiously watering her flowers, with one eye on the street, and the gunner addressed her politely.

"I am in search of Mrs. Longford; can you help me to find her? My paper tells me that her address is No. 49, but I misdoubt me that it can be that house."

His voice was educated and his manner refined, and the neighbour bounced eagerly out of her front garden, scenting an interesting piece of family history, that might serve to divert the street for some days.

In another moment, the gunner was in possession of every detail of Mrs. Longford's life since she had first arrived at Yawdon, a lonely sorrowful woman, and his face assumed an expression of doubt and horror, that changed the ruddy colour of it to ashen grey.

It was perhaps natural that Mrs. Gard should represent herself as having been the particular friend of the poor distraught soul.

By her generosity had the house been supplied with the necessaries of life, and such kindnesses as Mrs. Longford would accept, and according to Mrs. Gard, they had not been a few.

"My mother—mad," said Longford dully at last. "She, I remember as the prettiest, nippiest little woman, in a smart white frock, with a bit of mistletoe in her hair at Christmas time, and always a joke about it. I suppose that when I 'listed and father drowned himself, she must have got queer by degrees. I wondered all the seven years that I was in India why she never wrote but twice. Perhaps it has been my fault, but I never thought when I took the shilling, that father would put an end to himself, just for a bit of failure in his business."

"Aye, you never know," said the neighbour gloomily. "She's very mad at times and wanders awful in her speech."

Longford grew more ghastly under the tan of his face, and choking for breath, loosened the strap of his forage cap at his chin.

"It—will be all—right—now—I have come back," he said at last. "And maybe the sight of me will bring back her senses a bit."

"I'll take you next door," volunteered Mrs. Gard. "You look quite queer yourself, man. Have a drop of something first."

But Longford shook his head; and she, tightening the strings of her shawl, that had come loose in her excitement, opened the gate, and Longford followed her up the winding path, round to the back door.

It stood on the latch, and they passed through the deserted kitchen, up the wooden stairs that were thick with the dust of many years.

One of the attic doors stood ajar, and Mrs. Gard peered in with a stare of curiosity, then drew back sharply to allow the young man to enter.

Mrs. Longford was on her knees by the bed.

She had taken down the picture of the yellow-haired boy, and was crooning a baby lullaby over it, her body moving to and fro, with the gesture of a mother rocking her child to sleep.

She had stuck a piece of mistletoe in her dishevelled hair, though heaven alone knew where she could have procured such a thing, and the gown that she wore was a torn white muslin, belted round the waist with a baby's sash of blue ribbon.

"Heaven!" groaned the young man under his breath, "my poor mother."

His eyes took in the pathos of the relics that had belonged to him as a child, his toys, his clothes, his books, and he wrung his hands, while Mrs. Gard watched him out of her sharp black eyes.

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"Mother!" he said hoarsely at last, "mother!"

Mrs. Longford turned her head slowly.

Often in her dreams, in the madness of her waking thoughts, had she heard such a word, such a voice. There was no need to answer, for the ghost of the past was with her once again.

"Mother," he said again desperately, with a wild longing that broke through his agony of trouble.

She turned and saw him, and tottered to her feet, holding the picture against her breast.

Framed in the doorway he stood. Time had hollowed his cheeks, his yellow hair was clipped close to his head, his rounded features had taken the imprint of the world that is made up of so much knowledge and suffering.

But she knew him at once, with the wonderful instinct of a mother, for whom there is no deception.

The man saw the light of recognition in her eyes, and sprang forward to catch her in his arms.

She felt the living warmth of those strong arms about her body that had ached for a touch of love for so long.

She saw the love that shone in his sorrowful eyes for her, and stretching out a trembling hand, she touched him softly, her fingers wandering over each feature whose portrait she had so often held against her breast.

"Jem," she said with a harsh scream, that seemed to be the outcome of her many lonely years of pain.

Then, as his lips touched hers, she gave a little sob:

"Oh, Jem," she said again, her tones melting to the perfection of the tenderness he so well remembered.

"Jem—dearie—at last——"

"Mother! oh, mother! What is it? Look here, look here!"

But when Mrs. Gard hurried up with offers of assistance and eager sympathy, she saw that Jem Longford held in his arms a dead woman, and that he was crying over her like a little child.

Joy had been too much for a soul attuned to sorrow, and in the coming of it, her heart had broken.

C. E. C. Weigall.

THE TROTTER.

"Ta! Ta! Trotter, no more play now—mamma must run and dress."

The Trotter listened attentively. Yes, those were the wheels of father's gig coming up the drive. He was puzzled in his small mind; the sound of father's wheels was always the signal to leave off play with mamma. Why?

Trotter's mamma waved a small hand. She was a diminutive person with quantities of fluffy fair hair and deep blue eyes like the Trotter's. The belt round her muslin frock was surely very small even for her; the bloom on her cheeks rather more decided in tint than Nature intended; in fact, where Nature failed (or rather where Dolly Lovegrove fancied Nature failed) there Art stepped in.

Trotter waited with his solemn blue eyes fixed on his mamma's departing figure. She had thrown the baby down so suddenly that he felt half inclined to cry. (It doesn't take much to bring tears at five years old.)

However, he thought better of it, life might be worse; for exit mamma, enter papa, Tommy Trotter's beloved gee-gee, and Bob, that wonderfully interesting Bob, that important person enveloped in buttons. Oh! how those buttons glistened in the sun.

The Trotter was a contented person on the whole, but if there was one individual he was envious of it was Bob—if there was one thing his soul longed for, it was those buttons. He always imagined papa took Bob out because of them (he must be proud of such a noble array).

One day he had asked nurse, who was a good-hearted soul, to sew him beautiful brass buttons, as much like Bob's as possible, all over his pinafore, and then marched boldly down to the hall hours before papa could possibly have arrived and proudly awaited his coming.

But mamma had appeared and spoiled it all. In answer to his "Me's all buttons to go out with papa," she had caught him up in her arms and carried him back to nurse, with instructions to put Master James to bed. "Master James," that was the height of displeasure. He didn't understand in the least. Mamma was always funny, Nurse called her "herratic," this time she said—jealousy.

Well now he ran gleefully up to papa, who petted and made much of him; he was not like mamma, he was old quite old, and oh, so tired looking—but old and tired as he was, when he played it was with all his heart.

However, when he was angry the Trotter knew all coaxing was in vain, and he was obliged to bear his punishment like a man. The inflictor suffered much more than the inflicted though. Now with mamma, Trotter never knew quite where he stood, a smack one

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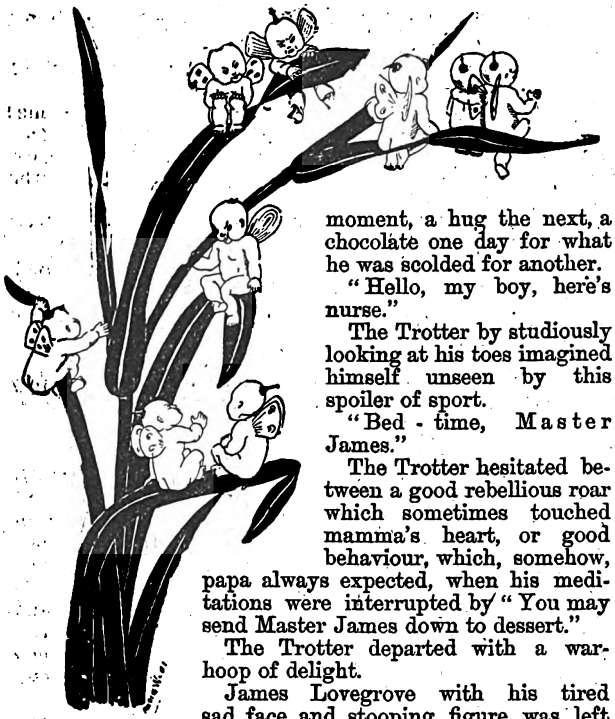

moment, a hug the next, a chocolate one day for what he was scolded for another.

"Hello, my boy, here's nurse."

The Trotter by studiously looking at his toes imagined himself unseen by this spoiler of sport.

"Bed - time, Master James."

The Trotter hesitated between a good rebellious roar which sometimes touched mamma's heart, or good behaviour, which, somehow, papa always expected, when his meditations were interrupted by "You may send Master James down to dessert."

The Trotter departed with a war-hoop of delight.

James Lovegrove with his tired sad face and stooping figure was left alone.

A rustle of silk, an odour of the latest perfume.

"Good evening, Dorothea."

"Good evening, James."

"You dine out to-night?"

"Yes! Truman is late, Ah, here he is," as the brougham drove up. "Elise, my fan."

The smart looking butler who appeared to escort his mistress to the carriage, retreated, the master himself acted as valet on this occasion.

"Good-night, Dorothea. Will you be late to-night?"

"No," with a nervous laugh, "good-night."

"Where shall I direct Truman?"

"He knows, thanks; good-night."

James Lovegrove bowed.

There was a peculiar ring in his voice as he directed the coachman to drive on.

This was the state of affairs at the Dovecote, about the most inappropriate name the charming Putney villa could have, but doubtless the last owners had loved and billed and cooed there, possibly cooed on till Darby and Joan had flown together to another world.

James Lovegrove had felt the inappropriateness of the name but pride kept him from having it altered, for fear of the work people and servants, and neighbours.

Dolly also recognised the mistake, but had flippantly remarked.

"What's in a name?"

James Lovegrove had made a mistake; he, a middle-aged, wealthy merchant had married a pretty actress. He had fallen in love with Dolly Rainsford years ago, and read contrary to other folk's opinion a good heart beat beneath that flippant little manner, and truth and innocence in those deep blue eyes in spite of the pencilled lines underneath.

And somehow this tall, strong, middle-aged man brought out all Dolly Rainsford's best feelings, and so he always saw her fairest side, and when he asked her to marry him, she was glad as a tired child to put herself under his protection.

She gave up the stage without a pang. She was tired, so tired of the struggle for fame and all the petty jealousies and temptations, and for the first year of her married life she was happy, only a little afraid of her sombre-looking husband. He felt a little disappointed in the timidity and childishness of his wife. He liked it at first but later it began to pall.

One day he brought a friend in to dine, a renowned actor who wanted to renew the acquaintance of little Dolly Rainsford. He did so! By degrees he accompanied them out, soon James Lovegrove was too busy to go also, then rather than disappoint his wife he allowed her to go alone with him.

Jack Holmes was an old friend.

By-and-bye the painted lines and rosy tints which had been discarded by Lovegrove's special request reappeared.

Jack Holmes was always saying a great actress was wanted. Those with talent who left the stage were positively wicked.

Lovegrove noticed nothing in these remarks, Dolly who met the accompanying glances saw more—and understood. And so they drifted apart, quite politely but surely.

During the second year James Lovegrove junior made his appearance. Dolly thought Lovegrove wanting in fatherly feelings towards his adorable son and heir. She adored him as a child a new toy, but would never have dreamed of giving up a pleasure on the Trotter's behalf.

Lovegrove noticed this, and was more jealous for his son than he had ever been on his own account.

He petted and spoiled the boy behind his mother's back, but somehow in her presence he was shy.

* * * * *

The Trotter came down to dessert, he seemed flushed and tired, he didn't talk much but as he expressed it, "was dreffel thirsty and felt all burning."

Lovegrove felt uneasy and sent for nurse, who took the Trotter to bed, for a wonder without demur. He was left alone in a brown study.

* * * * *

At a small table at the Pitsani Restaurant, Dolly Lovegrove and Jack Holmes were supping.

She was flushed and excited. He also seemed less calm than usual.

"My dear girl," he was saying. "Thirty pounds a week, you might make a name. Absurd to be cooped up with a dull old fogey and a baby. I'm leading man, and——"

Various scraps of conversation came from the surrounding tables. A contented clatter of knives and forks, the popping of corks, and the noise of the waiters as they rushed to and fro.

Over there the fair woman in blue was giggling loudly, and the lovesick youth by her side looked volumes.

An elderly couple at the next table showed disapproval. At that table in the corner a little *débutante* was talking excitedly with her parents of her first opera.

The next table was a party of three: a pretty woman,

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a handsome man, and the third evidently her husband looked decidedly out of it and anything but pleased.

Above all a delicious waltz was playing.

* * * * *

A knock at the dining-room door.

"Come in! You, Nurse! What is it?"

"Please, sir, Master James, he isn't at all well, sir. He's that feverish and a bit delirious too. We ought to send for the doctor."

"Send! No! I'll go myself at once. I'll just have a look at him first."

Up strode Lovegrove.

There in his tiny cot the Trotter with wide open eyes was wailing.

"I wants mamma, my own booful mamma," he cried, over and over again.

Lovegrove with a furious feeling tugging at his heart, rushed down, was out and at Doctor Dent's in a moment.

Doctor Dent came and muttered about young children who were weaklings and high fevers.

"Where's his mother?" he asked sharply, "she ought to be here. He must be given in to. This crying only raises the temperature."

The doctor left. Midnight found the Trotter quieter; he realised it was papa who was sitting by him and smoothing his hot little head and soon fell into a doze, then suddenly roused again.

It was a noise in the street had awakened him. The doctor had said he was particularly to be kept quiet, on no account to be disturbed if he slept.

Yes! It was the carriage wheels, that loud laughter and those voices that aroused him.

"Good-bye!"

"Not good-bye, *au revoir!*"

To Lovegrove the laughter sounded fiendish. He beckoned to nurse, and in spite of the Trotter's cries went down. He ran into Dolly in the middle of the stairs.

"The child is ill," he said hoarsely.

"What, ill? The Trotter ill?"

All the joyous flippancy left her voice, all the sparkling light of her eyes vanished.

"Ill!"

She brushed past him and made straight for the nursery, straight for the little cot.

The Trotter gazed at her but he did not know the lady in white satin and was frightened. His cries for mamma were forgotten now; it was papa, papa only, that he wanted. She tried to lift him out of his cot.

"Do away, naughty lady," he lisped, "I wants papa."

Lovegrove waved her away and resumed his post by the bed. A wild look came into Dolly's eyes.

"He doesn't want me! The child doesn't want me! Nobody wants me. Jack, Jack! I am coming to you."

She rushed to the door. The rustle of her dress roused the Trotter. The moonlight streaming on the white satin and diamonds cast an eerie light.

"Papa! An angel! Look! Look! It's doing. Tall it back."

There was no need. The angel heard and turned. He held out his little arms and said "Tum!"

Something in her movements recalled him. He jumped up.

"It's mamma, my own booful mamma!" he cried.

She clasped him in her arms, and the Trotter, happy now, laid his little head on her shoulder and slept peacefully. It was the mother's turn now.

"Leave us," she murmured.

James Lovegrove, as he paced up and down the library, kept the vision in his mind of his wife, flippant, childish Dolly, pacing up and down the nursery, regardless of satin and diamonds, the Trotter in her arms, enveloped in her opera-cloak. The woman who thought so much of feathers and furbelows, had snatched up this masterpiece of Doucet's, ostrich feathers, chiffon and all, and had wrapped it round her child. Even the old nurse, who was no friend of her mistress, who never made allowances for youth, beauty, or anything else, demurred.

"Leave us!"

Some of the old stage movements came back to her. There was a world in that wave of her hand.

Nurse retired.

Ah! She was the queen of the nursery now. Rather queen of that one small subject, than monarch of all the audiences of all the theatres in the world.

* * * * *

The sun, peeping in at the window, crowned her queen of home.

The doctor came next morning. Possibly, it was owing to the child's being better, or it may have been something in Mrs. Lovegrove's face; anyway, a few homely facts he had meant to say, remained unspoken.

The fever had run its course; and to Dolly, the fever for fame, glory, admiration, had died out.

The Trotter lived! Whatever he accomplished in after life, it was at the beginning and unconsciously that his best work was done.

'Tis no mean thing to reunite two souls!

Queenie Sichel.

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Mabel's Stratagem.

It was almost like a bit of Persian poetry, that little conservatory, in its glow and fragrance and soft, delicious murmur of leaves. And Mabel Moore herself looked not unlike a Persian enchantress, as she stood resting one hand on a marble vase.

She was not alone in the flowery fragrance of the conservatory. Ernest Beckford was leaning against one of the stages, twisting and untwisting a spray of jessamine with a sort of impatient rapidity.

"Mabel," he said, "you know that you are asking impossibilities."

"Am I?"

"I cannot go to South America without you."

"You can, Ernest, and you will."

"But, my darling, only think of it—a year's exile from you!"

"Will it be any easier for me to endure?" she asked calmly.

"Sometimes I fancy, Mabel," he resumed impetuously, "that you don't care for me."

"Ernest!"

"My dearest, I know I am unjust, but——"

"Now let us understand just what you wish me to do in this matter."

"I want you to marry me this afternoon and go out to South America with me in the ship that sails to-morrow."

"A very reasonable wish," said Mabel, laughing. "But you know I will never marry you while your mother refuses her sanction."

"She does not know you."

"That makes no difference. I shall never enter a family where I am not welcomed!"

"But just consider how unreasonable you are."

"She fancies me a hollow, heartless woman of the world, does she not? She is unwilling to trust her son's happiness in the keeping of a coquette."

"I am sorry I ever allowed you to read that unreasonable letter."

"But I am glad. No, I have too much pride and dignity to marry you unless your mother gives her free and full consent."

"Then you do not love me, Mabel?"

"I do love you, Ernest, better than I like to acknowledge to myself."

"Mabel," he urged tenderly, "let us cut this Gordian knot by the exercise of our own free will. Become my wife."

Mabel Moore shook her head.

"Let us wait and see what time may bring forth," she said archly. "And now leave me; remember that the ship sails at noon to-morrow."

"I can't possibly go in this vessel."

"But if you do not go to-morrow you will be obliged to wait another week, and your uncle may be dead by the time you arrive."

"Yes, I know, but——"

"Well?"

"I must get that companion for my mother—she will be entirely alone. Mrs. Carter told me she knew someone who would take the situation, and I shall have to go over to see her about it to-morrow."

"Don't let that detain you. I think I know of a young woman who would make an excellent companion, and I will send her to Hampstead."

"Can she read aloud?"

"Oh, she can do everything."

"Send her on, then. But, Mabel——"

"Well?"

"It strikes me you are anxious to hurry me off."

"Ernest," she said in a voice that quivered a little, "you are misjudging me. I want you to do your duty. The sunshine will come at last, if you can only wait unrepiningly."

"Little prophetess," he said, drawing her fondly towards him, "I accept your auguries. No one ought to be discouraged who is sure of your love."

* * * * *

"Going away, Miss Mabel?"

The little maid stood aghast in her occupation of putting away laces in a satin-lined box of sandalwood.

"Yes. Get my trunks ready, Mildred; I prefer to pack them myself."

"And when do we start, miss?"

"I shall not take you with me."

"But Miss Mabel——"

"I choose to go alone. There—now leave me to myself."

* * * * *

Mrs. Beckford, of Hampstead, was sitting alone in her parlour—musing on her far off son, with a total abstraction from all outward sights and sounds—and when all of a sudden she looked up, a pretty young person clad in brown cloth gown stood before her.

"What is it you want?" said Mrs. Beckford curtly.

"If you please, madam, I am come to offer myself as your companion."

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"Who sent you?" demanded the lady.

"I heard that Mrs. Beckford was wanting a companion, and I should like to take the situation."

"Hum-m-m," said the old lady. "What's your name?"

"Edith Moore."

"Moore—Moore? Got any relations at Sydenham?"

"No, madam. I am alone in the world."

"I'm glad of that. I couldn't stand anyone who is connected with the guitar-playing girl who—but never mind that just now. Where are your references?"

Edith Moore drew a letter or two from her pocket.

"So Mrs. Carter knows you, eh?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Well," commented the matron, glancing over the notes, "these recommendations seem very satisfactory. I—don't know—but that you may come and try. The only objection I can see is that you're too pretty, but I don't think you are really to blame for that. Take off your things."

* * * * * *

More than a year has crept over the daily current of life at Hampstead. The trees were bare and leafless, and the snow lay white and deep by the roadside.

"How soon it grows dark!" said Mrs. Beckford, with a little sigh. "That's right, Edith, put on some more wood and draw the curtains. Now we're snug!"

Snug, indeed, they were, with the shaded lamp glowing softly on the table and the bright wood fire sending up its fluttering spires of red light on the hearth.

Edith was sitting on a low stool beside her. She looked wonderfully pretty.

"What's that you were saying a little while ago about going back to Sydenham, my dear?" said the old lady, suddenly turning round to Edith. "I want you to understand that you can't go. I can't spare you."

She put one arm round Edith's neck, and drew the round cheek down on her lap.

"Do you really love me, Mrs. Beckford?" asked the girl, earnestly.

"Love you, darling. I could no more get along without you than I could without the sunshine. It seems as though you belong to me. I don't know what you've done to steal my old heart away, I'm sure, but you remind me somehow of the little daughter I once lost. You won't leave me, dear?"

There was something almost pathetic in her pleading voice.

"Dear Mrs. Beckford," whispered Edith, with the nappy crimson dyeing her cheek, "I'll never leave you; I will stay with you always. Oh, I am so glad you have learned to love me—more glad than I can tell you. But——"

"Well, dear?"

"There's something I want to tell you—something I nave kept back from you," faltered Edith. "Mrs. Beckford, I am——"

But Mrs. Beckford had started to her feet.

"Hush! did I not hear his footstep? It was my boy's foot upon the threshold! He has come back to me!"

She rushed to the door and threw it wide open, and the tall, stalwart figure caught her in his arms as if she had been a little child.

"Mother, are you glad to see your wanderer?"

As she drew him in, he caught a momentary glimpse of the figure in the apartment beyond.

"You are not alone, mother?"

"No, Edith is with me."

"And who may Edith be?"

"Didn't you get my letters? I wrote all about her."

"I haven't seen a letter for three months."

Edith was standing where the full brilliance of the lamp shone upon her, as mother and son entered the room together. Ernest stopped short, gazing at her in bewilderment.

"Mabel!"

"Ernest, what do you mean?" exclaimed Mrs. Beckford. "This is Edith Moore."

"She is Mabel Moore, my own sweetheart!" said Ernest, springing forward and sealing his words on lip and brow and cheek, while the young lady, much to Mrs. Beckford's horror, made not the slightest resistance. The next moment, however, she withdrew from his encircling arms, and glided to the astonished matron's side.

"Mrs. Beckford," she said softly, "I may tell you now what was just trembling on my lips when Ernest's footsteps interrupted me. My name is Edith, but it is Mabel too. Will you forgive me for stealing into your heart by stratagem? Half an hour ago I promised never to leave you. You will not send me away from you now?"

And Mrs. Beckford melted straightway before the pleading of the blue eyes.

"I always wanted a daughter," she said, "but I couldn't bear the idea of Mabel Moore, the heiress."

"But you will love little Edith, who came to be your companion?"

"I suppose I ought to scold you for deceiving me," said the old lady, "but I—I couldn't help loving you if I were to try ever so hard, and I don't want to try, and that's just the truth of the matter. There, I must see about some tea for you."

As though Ernest cared for anything less ethereal than Mabel just then? F. M. C.

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A Mission in Petticoats.

YES, it amuses you vastly, you young rogues, to learn that the picture of a girl, which hangs in your grandfather's bedroom is simply a portrait of your old grandad. You thought it was a likeness of your dear grandmother before she married me, eh? Well, now you know better.

Want to hear how it all came about? No; of course men didn't wear skirts and petticoats, like women, in those days! Anyone would think I was an ancient Briton.

It's only about fifty years ago; but I suppose that is a terribly long time for you to think of. I'll tell you the tale, since you wish to hear it.

It was at the time when the man who afterwards became Napeleon III. was pursuing his intrigues in order to win the throne of France. I was a young fellow of twenty-one and very badly off; my prospects were anything but brilliant, I had all the Briton's love of adventure, and I had arrived at that condition of mind when a youth is ready to do any mortal thing for the purpose of making a little headway in the world. I wanted to turn a little of the darkness into light, and I was not particular what I did to accomplish this end, so long as the method was not to my discredit.

I was one night walking moodily along the side of the Thames when I passed two men in earnest conversation. As they went by I caught the words "Whom can we get to undertake it?" and, without thinking of what I was doing, I wheeled round, walked right up to them, and said, "I'll do it."

I have often laughed since at the scare I gave them. They turned upon me with fierce exclamations in French, and one whipped out a pistol and pointed it at my head. They said something to me in the same language, but I shook my head.

"Talk in English, as you did just now," I suggested; "then I shall understand."

They looked at each other. Then they smiled.

"It is true," assented one of them. "We have lived many years here, and we fall insensibly into the language." He said a few words in his own tongue to his companion, after which he again addressed me. "Are you in need of work?"

"I am in need of money," I responded bluntly, "and I suppose I must work to get it."

"Come with us," he said, just as abruptly. And we all three made our way to an inn that was situated in one of the streets that led into the Strand

We took our seats in a small room off the bar, and I noticed the second man eyeing me rather unfavourably. Scarcely were we comfortably seated in our chairs, when he spoke contemptuously.

"He will not do for us—he is no stronger than a girl."

Of course, I was quite aware that this remark was directed against me. I ought to explain that, in appearance, I really was rather girlish. I was not more than medium height, I hadn't a vistage of a moustache, and I was slim of figure as well as effeminate of countenance. I had often been twitted about it, but the jesters had discovered that I was strong of muscle. I stood up defiantly now.

"My appearance may be that of a girl," I retorted, "but my strength is that of a man, as I have proved and will prove. Look here," I added, baring my arm, "what of that?"

I fancy that he was somewhat of a judge of muscle and sinew, for after a searching glance he apologised gracefully.

Then we came quickly to the matter in hand. They first questioned me closely regarding myself, and then told me what they wanted me to do. I was to convey a small packet to Rouen and deliver it to a Monsieur Bardeau who resided in the Grande Rue, which, they explained was the equivalent of "High Street."

"Is that all?" I asked in some surprise.

"You will find the task sufficiently hard to accomplish," was the answer of Monsieur Lebrun, as the chief speaker called himself. "The very fact that we are sending it by an Englishman and by hand rather than by the mail is enough to demonstrate that the mission is difficult."

"What is the price and what have I to fear?" was my next remark.

"I will give you enough money to pay your expenses and twenty pounds in addition. Monsieur Bardeau will give you eighty pounds more if—er, when you hand the packet to him. As to the other question, you run the risk of being robbed of the packet by our enemies, but exactly how or by whom I am, naturally, quite unable to say. That is your affair. But, if the worst comes, destroy it."

I began to think that the reward was not proportionate, and tried to get an increase; but they refused, and I did not like to lose the chance. So we commenced to discuss plans for the journey.

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Three days later, if you had been alive, you might have seen a young English girl, attended by an elderly Frenchwoman, land at Boulogne. The young lady was on her way to Paris, to join her relatives, but she intended to visit various places on her way. That damsel was your grandfather, just as you see him in that picture.

It had occurred to me that such a disguise was the best calculated to effect the object in view; my companion was not disguised—she was genuine. The plan had been successful so far, and I considered myself indebted to my girlish appearance.

Of course as an English girl I was obliged to have a companion, but I was distrustful of this lady; not because I thought she would play us false—my employers had great confidence in her, but because she might betray our game in her fright if we got into a fix.

We stayed that night at the best inn, and set out the next morning in a hired conveyance that was to take us a few miles across country towards our destination. I was an "eccentric" daughter of perfidious Albion, desirous of running about the country; but as all our people are eccentric in the eyes of our neighbours, there was nothing uncommon in my vagaries.

"This is easy work and I shall earn that money without trouble," said I to my companion, Madame Juvette.

"I hope so," she returned nervously, "but I would not say one word about the affair anywhere, even in English. It is not money that I ask; I am a devoted friend of the cause; but I dare not hope that we shall be fortunate enough to outwit them."

"Nonsense!" I exclaimed in a light-hearted manner. "The roundabout way we have come and our assumed characters have thrown them off the scent entirely."

I contrasted my present idea with my former notion, when I had asked that the reward might be increased, and I laughed gleefully. That was where I made a mistake, for I was not out of the wood.

I had a mind to enjoy the trip as much as I could, so when we had gone some little distance and had arrived in the midst of some scenery that pleased me, I had the conveyance stopped and told Madame Juvette that I intended to stroll about for a while. We alighted, she somewhat unwillingly, telling the coachman to await our return, and off we went.

I do not quite know how long we had been walking when we reached a narrow lane that wound in and out. I liked the peaceful look of this turning, and we walked along it for a few yards. In doing so, as it proved, I had played into the hands of the enemy.

I was reaching up to pick a flower, when an exclamation from my travelling companion caused me to turn. I found myself confronted by a man of middle height, about forty years of age, and clearly a native of modern Gaul. He smiled sarcastically as he addressed me in English.

"Mademoiselle, like all the misses of the other side, is very daring, and her daring has made her imprudent."

I could see at once that he meant that I had been too venturesome in walking down that lane while on my mission—for I had no doubt that he had tracked me. But one thing that was not so evident was—did he really take me for a young woman or was that a part of the sarcasm?

"I do not understand what Monsieur means," I answered, assuming an air of surprise. "I thought that a girl—and a foreigner—would be sure of safety here in France, where the men are so chivalrous." I tried to catch a glimpse of Madame Juvette, out of the corner of my eye, but I could not see that lady.

"Mademoiselle will be safe enough here," said the man, his smile broadening in a way that made me cross, "if she does not interfere with politics. It will be better for her to give up that document she has upon her."

There was no longer any utility in pretending innocence; the crisis had come, and if I wished to preserve the packet I must fight for it. I had a pistol and a dagger about me, but so certain had I been that I should not be molested that I had not got them ready to my hand. I made a movement to get at one or the other, but my antagonist observed my intention and, stepping quickly forward, he grasped my right wrist.

"No resistance, mademoiselle," he continued sternly. "I do not wish to hurt you, but I must have those papers."

My heart gave a little leap; he had ceased to be sarcastic and he still addressed me as "Mademoiselle." That was my chance.

"Oh, will no one help me?" I cried, making a pretendedly great effort to release myself. "Why should I be taken for a conspirator?"

I knew that my feeble attempt to drag myself from his clutch would have a double effect—it would give him the impression that I was a weak girl and it would bring him just a little closer to me. I was ready for him.

With the object, I take it, of stopping further resistance, he pulled me towards him and tried to grip my other wrist; but instead of a weakly maiden he had to

Without thinking of what I was doing, I wheeled round, walked right up to them, and said: "I'll do it."

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I had a pistol and a dagger about me. I made a movement to get at one or the other, but my antagonist observed my intention, and, stepping quickly forward, he grasped my right wrist.

deal with a man who was not only strong, but had learned to wrestle and to box. In an instant I had him; there was a very brief struggle, and then he went flying over the head of "Mademoiselle" and landed with a groan in the ditch.

I should have liked to continue the affray, but I judged it more prudent to be off. I was picking up my skirts to run, but I heard Madame Juvette calling me.

"Come this way," she cried. "Heavens, but how did you manage that?"

"Easily enough!" I returned. "But we are not going back to the carriage. That rascal of a driver is one of the gang, I'm sure. No matter; he must now get his pay from the other parties!"

I knew by the position of the sun the direction in which we should journey in order to reach Rouen, and I resolved to walk some of the distance in as straight a line as I could. We went through fields and rough lanes, cutting off corners by scrambling through hedges, much to Madame Juvette's disgust, for she was not young and active as I was. Still, the thought of the "cause" supported her, and we covered many miles before nightfall.

I felt that we must get to Rouen without avoidable delay now. I did not know how many there might be in that gang, and I could hardly rely upon my disguise any more. So I wanted to put a goodly space between my packet and the man I had left in the ditch, before he could recover, tell his friends, and get on my track again. So we avoided the villages on our way, until night and fatigue compelled us to think of some sort of shelter.

"There seems to be a small village just in front of us," I said. "We will seek rest and food at the inn or of some farmer. We can say that we have been ill-treated by robbers on the road, and forced to give up our conveyance and walk. That will account for our torn clothing. I think it impossible that our mission can be known there."

Madame agreed; she was so done up that she would have acquiesced in any plan, I verily believe. Our clothing was torn by our passage through hedges, to say nothing of a big rent in my bodice—a souvenir of the wrestling bout.

When we reached the village I tried a cottage, but was viewed with such mistrust that I walked off in high dudgeon to the inn.

There we were hospitably received, food was promptly placed before us, and the necessary sewing materials handed to Madame Juvette in order that she might repair our clothing.

"I doubt whether it will be safe to enter Rouen in your present disguise," observed Madame, when we were alone in the small parlour. "It might prejudice Bardeau, and we must not betray anything of our plans before the time is propitious for the *coup*."

"Then the only way is to push on to the outskirts of the city, and for you to enter Rouen and bring Bardeau out to me," I remarked. "Unless," I added, thoughtfully, "I can get some masculine clothing and pass as a deaf and dumb peasant or something of that sort."

"I might enter the next village or town alone and buy some male attire," said Juvette, "but to do that here would be to arouse suspicion. We can try, but I think it will be best for you not to be seen near the house of Bardeau."

It was at the time of the year when night falls early, and by nine o'clock we had spent a fairly long evening. Madame Juvette was ready for her couch, but I was refreshed by the rest, and in no mood to retire for a while. So she went at the landlady's invitation, and I decided to sit up yet another hour. As I think of it now, it must have appeared indecorous that a girl should sit alone by the fire, but the landlady evinced no surprise. On the contrary, it struck me that she was pleased, and I thought it was because the other bedroom was not quite ready.

About twenty minutes later, there was a rap at the door, and a young woman, about my own age, entered and spoke to me in my own language.

"May I sit with you and talk to you a little?" she asked. "I am of the same nationality as yourself. My mother married a second time—she married the proprietor of this inn. She died two years ago. The landlady is my stepfather's sister."

"Oh!" I said. "That accounts for your being able to speak English. Do you like living here?"

She hesitated a moment. "No," she replied in a low tone. "I do not."

The conversation flagged. Seeing that she had come in to have a chat, I thought this very strange. I observed her eyeing me very narrowly, and I began to feel puzzled. Several minutes passed, and we had exchanged but a dozen sentences or so, when she rose to go. I was vexed with myself for being so dull; I am not usually lacking in conversational powers, but something in her manner stopped the flow of words

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"I must go now," she whispered, coming closer to me, "but first I wish to give you a word of advice. Be very careful, *Monsieur*."

And before I had recovered from my surprise she was gone. She had divined my sex, but how? Had she found out my secret unaided, or had she been told? At any rate, her warning was worthy of my attention. I would be careful! I looked to my pistol and dagger to see that they were in good condition, and to place them handy for use.

The landlady came in again, and questioned me by a look as to whether I was prepared for bed. I nodded assent and followed her out of the room. She carried a flickering candle, but it gave so little light that it was impossible to see where I was going.

We went along a passage, leading to the back of the house, where I supposed the stairs to be situated. She stopped at a door—I could tell that by the sensation of being near something, and by hearing her raise the latch. It opened; I felt a breath of air, and then I was pushed violently forward through the doorway and into a yard, or similar space, paved with great cobbles.

I was just able to prevent myself from falling headlong, but I went down upon my knees. I heard the door slam behind me, and an exclamation in front. I leapt to my feet, and stepped backwards cautiously till I felt my back touch the wall; then out came my pistol.

But, alas! I had hardly drawn it forth ere I heard a kind of swishing or soughing to one side; I made a rapid move, which, undoubtedly, saved me from a severe blow, but the cudgel struck the firearm and knocked it out of my hand. It fell somewhere near me, but I could not locate it.

It appeared that I had two adversaries, armed with staves, perhaps with swords as well. They had no firearms apparently—firearms make a noise, I remembered. I had my dagger only; the fight was therefore unequal.

It was my best plan to keep my back to the wall, while dodging their blows and trying to get one in for myself. There was but little light, but, fortunately, my sight was keen, and I hoped to be able to follow their movements.

I am not likely to forget that fight in the dark. I had to keep both my eyes and my ears strained to their fullest capabilities, in order to defend myself against the two men who were bent upon reducing me to helplessness, at least, and taking the precious packet from me.

I found my feminine attire very much in the way; in my contests at school, and during my lessons in fencing, wrestling, and boxing, I had, of course, been accustomed to more freedom, and the new style of dress was decidedly irksome; still, I had no choice, and was forced to make the best of the matter.

I had my work cut out for me. I sparred about with my left hand, endeavouring to land a blow with my fist. I had to skip about to avoid their blows, and I made one or two feints and rushes in my efforts to make use of my dagger. I did not wish to kill either of them, but I meant to do my utmost to disable them. And I believe that they were actuated by the same motive towards myself.

I cannot tell how long we were at it, but I suppose it was only a few minutes. I had received three slight blows—slight because I had partially succeeded in dodging them, but at last one of the sticks came down on my left arm with sufficient force to render it useless for a time. I ground my teeth in rage; I was now no match for them, tired as I had become, and with only one arm.

I had to keep my eyes and my ears strained to their fullest capabilities, in order to defend myself against the two men who were bent upon reducing me to helplessness, and taking the precious packet from me.

My antagonists chuckled.

"Give it up to us," demanded one of them in bad English. "We don't want to kill you, but——"

"You'll have to kill me before you get it!" I cried desperately.

They made a step towards me, but just then something seemed to irritate my eyes and nose. I sniffed involuntarily, and the next instant I sneezed loudly. My eyes smarted and my nose tickled so that I could do nothing but sneeze. Then I heard the others swearing—that's what I took it to be, from the sound—and sneezing also. All three

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of us were practically helpless under some evil influence.

I was leaning against what I thought was the wall, sneezing violently, the tears streaming from my eyes, when my support yielded gently, and before I was aware of it I was in the corridor once more, and the door shut behind me. I then saw that my saviour was the young English girl, who said hurriedly:

"I told you to be careful. Now you must be off—quick. They forgot that my room-window overlooked that yard. I hope the pepper has not hurt you much, but it was the only thing I could think of to stop the fight and help you. I tried to throw it mostly over them."

"Heaven bless you!" I cried. "And Madame Juvette?"

"She is away, on the road; you will find her. But get away at once."

By this time we had reached a side door, and she pushed me out. I had no time even to ask her name, for she shut the door softly in my face.

I caught up with Juvette, and the next day she purchased a suit for me. But it was useless to expect that we should not be overtaken if we travelled together; she was known as well as I. So we decided to part; she to remain in the town, where she made friends with a woman, and I, after having studied the route, pushed on by the quietest roads to my destination. We were to meet again, if possible, on my return journey.

I soon found that I was followed, but I eluded my pursuers by hiding in a ditch. I take it that they did not know my exact destination, for I heard no more of them.

I entered Rouen after dark on the following day, and went to Bardeau's house, which I had no trouble in finding, from the minute directions given to me by Juvette.

Monsieur Bardeau greeted me cordially, and made me comfortable while he read the contents of the packet. When he had finished he smiled.

"You have rendered us a great service," he said. At least, that is what he meant, for we had to talk as best we could with a mixture of the two languages and a plentiful use of signs. "Do you know what is in this?"

I shook my head.

"Nothing," was the astonishing reply. "That is, this page of writing is useless in itself, and is not the important document that you thought you were carrying. To me, who can read between the lines, it means that you have acted as a false scent. You were despatched with this document, a hint was allowed to be gleaned by the other side that a messenger, probably disguised as a girl, was taking important papers across the Channel—and the thing was done. They were on the watch for you, and while they were so occupied, another message was sent over to the proper party. That messenger has no doubt had an easy task, thanks to you. Of course, the better you defended your charge, the more they were thrown off the right scent. You have been very useful, and it gives me much pleasure to hand to you the eighty pounds promised to you."

I was nicely enraged when I managed to grasp the meaning of this. It was not pleasant to be tricked. After a while I cooled down a little, and I recognised that in my fashion I had rendered a service, and that I had at least fulfilled my mission. And I discovered that Juvette knew all about the plot.

"I told you to be careful. Now, you must be off—quick."

I took leave of Bardeau on the evening of the next day, he having cared for me and kept me in hiding for nearly twenty-four hours. I was this time disguised as an Italian workman, in clothes lent to me by Bardeau. It was understood that I should rejoin Juvette, but I was still sore at the deception practised on me, and I struck out for the coast in an entirely different direction. I never saw Madame Juvette again.

I had some difficulty in getting back to Old England, but I was not pursued, so far as I know. Anyhow, I got back safely.

I had about ninety pounds when I reached London, and this set me up in business — my adventure having satisfied me for the time.

It was nearly three years later when I ventured into France again, and I went straight to the inn where the fight in the dark had taken place. The object I had in view was immediately attained, for the first person I set eyes on was the young woman who had saved me.

After we were married—in London—we had that portrait painted. Both your grandmother and I were able to describe the dress for the guidance of the artist.

G. Day.

The best Pictorial History of the War is to be found from week to week in

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ILLUSTRATED WAR NEWS.

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of George Griffith's "Valdar the Oft-Born" to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source must be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. Jos. Edwards, 5 Berwick Street, Burnley. Attempts for this week's prize should deal with WAR ANECDOTES and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, February 5th. Post-cards only, please.

Worse than Killed.

A PRIVATE soldier in one of the Irish regiments engaged in South Africa in a dreadful battle cried out during the hottest part of the action:

"Och, murther! I'm kilt entirely."

"Are you wounded?" inquired an officer near him.

"Wounded is it? yer honour," replied Pat, "by the powers, I'm worse than kilt out and out. Wasn't I waiting for the last quarter of an hour for a pull at Tim Murphy's pipe, and there now, it's shot out of his mouth!"

The Men That Wanted it.

A REGIMENT of soldiers was drawn up for church parade in the barrack-square at Belfast, but the church was being repaired and could only hold half of them.

"Sergeant-major," shouted the colonel, "tell all the men who don't want to go to church to fall out on the reverse flank."

Of course, a large number quickly and gladly availed themselves of the privilege.

"Now, sergeant-major," said the colonel, "dismiss all the men who did not fall out, and march the others to church—they want it most."

What He Didn't Expect.

A BURNLEY man, who is a Reservist, got his papers for the front one day last week.

On going away he wanted his wife to accompany him to the station.

"Nay," said she, "aw shan't go to station wi' thi; but aw'll bid thee good-bye, and I hope tha'll give th' Boers as good a slugging as tha's given me, and aw'll bet they'll remember it!"

So Tommy walked away with a tear in his eye.

He Wanted to Join In.

A STRANGER once went into a London court and spent some time watching the proceedings. By-and-bye a man was brought up for contempt of court and fined, whereupon the stranger rose and said: "How much was the fine?"

"One pound," replied the clerk.

"Well," said the stranger, laying down the money, "if that's all I'd like to join in. I've had a few hours' experience of this court, and no one can feel a greater contempt for it than I do, and I am willing to pay for it."

Absorbed.

THE young man who writes verses was standing out in the night gazing at the sky when a friend ran across him.

"What are you doing? Studying astronomy?"

"Go away and don't disturb me. I am gazing into infinite distance."

"I don't see what satisfaction you find in that."

"That's because you never had any experience with editors. You don't know what a comfort it is to find some place where nothing is crowded out for lack of space."

Bow-Legged Stockings.

DURING last autumn a pitman was asked by a friend, who was very bow-legged, to purchase, when next "i' the toon," a pair of stockings for him. On the following pay Saturday the pitman entered the shop of a well-known hosier to make the purchase.

The shopman was most obligi g; but having shown the intending purchaser nearly every pair in stock, he at last thought it time to ask of the man a more minute description of what was required.

He said he had shown nearly all they had, and he was sure their shop was second to none, and as they had hitherto given satisfaction to all classes, it was strange that they could not now suit a customer. The pitman laconically replied: "What I want is a pair o' bow-legged yins."

Taking his Time for it.

THERE is a business man who is a member of a well-known firm, and who has an impediment in his speech.

He is not at all sensitive about it, however, and not only takes a joke at his own expense in good part, but often takes liberties with his friends based upon his own affliction. The other day he went to the telephone, and a conversation something like this ensued:

"H-h-hello! Is th-th-that Mr. J-J-Jones?"

"Yes; this is Mr. Jones. Who is that?"

"Why, I'm M-M-Mr. S-S-Smith."

"Ah, Mr. Smith, how are you? What can I do for you?"

"W-w-why, have y-y-you h-half an hour to s-spare?"

"Yes; I think I have."

"T-t-that's all r-r-right, then. I j-j-just want to h-h-have about t-t-two minutes' c-c-conver-sa-sation w-w-with you."

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Quite Another Sort of Man.

A distinguished divine of unusually solemn and impressive appearance went to a country town to lecture. He arrived early in the afternoon, and all the town, of course, spotted him within five minutes as a very great and saintly man. He went into a chemist's shop, and in tones that froze the young blood of the shopman said:

"Young—man—do—you—smoke?"

"Y-yes, sir," said the trembling clerk. "I'm sorry, but I learned the habit young, and haven't been able to leave it off."

"Then," said the great divine, without the movement of a muscle or the abatement of a shade of the awful solemnity of his voice, "can you tell me where I can get a good cigar?"

A Bit of His Own Back.

A farmer had just given his son a sound thrashing because he had accidentally killed one of his favourite fowls, and left him in the house sobbing while he went to look after his pigs. Presently the minister came up to the door, and asked:

"Is your father in?"

"No," replied the boy sulkily.

"Where has he gone?"

"He's in the pig-pen feedin' the pigs."

"Thank you, my little man; I'll go and see him."

The minister had not got many yards away when the boy called out:

"Oi say, minister, you'll know which is 'e; 'e's got a cap on!"

His New Hat.

A well-known clergymen of somewhat arbitrary manners was engaged to preach in a fashionable district, and purchased a new hat for the occasion. His guide, after what the parson thought a rude stare and smile, said:

"I beg your pardon, sir, your hat——"

"Oh, yes, never mind the hat, but your own business," said the clergyman curtly, and the young man was silenced.

The people they met stared and smiled, too.

"Strange how many notice when one has got a new hat," thought the parson.

The vicar met him at the church door, and, hesitating, said:

"Pardon me, but why do you wear your hat so?"

The tile was doffed, and found to be still covered with the white paper, which the unconscious parson had forgotten to remove.

He Thought Aloud.

In the North of England there was a man who engaged a lawyer to conduct a case in court. As the lawyer was not talking exactly to suit him, he got up to make a few remarks himself. The magistrate, of course, made him resume his seat. He got up again, and the magistrate made him resume his seat again. A third and fourth time this happened, and finally the old farmer got up and said:

"Well, sir, if you won't let me talk, won't you let me think?"

"Yes, certainly," replied the magistrate.

"Well, sir," he said, "I think you and all these lawyers are a set of sneakin' rascals."

Gallery Wit.

A funny story of the East-end stage refers to a popular actor named Harry Simmonds. He was supposed in a melodrama of the day to have run through a fortune, and to contemplate suicide. Someone knocked at the door of his wretched garret. He hastily thrust his revolver into the drawer of the table at which he sat. An old solicitor entered.

"It is my pleasing duty," said he, "to tell you that your Uncle John is dead, and" (impressively) "has left you half a million of money."

"Half a million of money!" said the suicide, thus suddenly restrained; "what shall I do with it—what *shall* I do with it?"

"Well, 'Arry," said a gallery boy, "I should buy a pair of boots—first!"

Open or Shut?

First Guest: "Hi! Waiter, open that window, please. I can't stand this heat."

Waiter: "Yes, d'rectly, sir!" (Opens the window.)

Second Guest (a little later): "Waiter, there's draught enough to give one a death of cold. Do shut the window."

Waiter: "Yes, sir." (Shuts the window.)

First Guest: "Waiter, are you mad? What have you closed the window for? Open it again this minute."

Waiter: "Very good, sir." (Goes to the landlord.) "One of the gentlemen wants the window open and the other wants it shut. What am I to do, sir?"

Landlord: "Do what the gentleman says who hasn't dined yet, of course."

Englishmen as Foreign Waiters.

While in Petersburg we encountered an Englishman who was consumed with thirst.

"And I don't know the name of a single drink in their language," he said ruefully.

"Bluff it out," observed a member of our party. "Go into one of these cafés, and call for what you want as if you knew all about it."

He did so, but he tried to speak Russian, as he did French, by the natural method.

"*Viski!*" he said to the waiter.

"Certainly, sir. Scotch or Irish?" replied the Russian.

How She Said "Yes."

A Lancashire lady has been relating a rather pretty story about a factory girl's way of answering a marriage proposal made to her.

"The young woman could not write or read writing, and one day she brought a letter to me to read for her. It contained an offer of marriage.

"I happened to know that the writer was a deserving young artisan, so I said to her: 'Now, you must consider this matter very seriously, and if you like to come to me when you have made up your mind, I will write a reply for you.'

"A day or two afterwards I met the girl again and asked her if she wanted me to answer the letter for her. 'Oh, that is all right,' said she, looking radiant and pleased. 'I've settled it. I answered it myself.'

"'Why, how did you do it?' I asked.

"And then she told me that she could make a capital 'I,' and that she stuck on the paper a piece of wool after it for 'wull'—'I wool.'"

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THE REAL AND THE COUNTERFEIT.

"AND you say that the diamonds were very valuable?" interrogated a plainly dressed man, seated at one side of the table.

"Worth £5,000, Mr.—what may I call your name?" asked Harold Brewster.

"Oh—Smith," responded the man.

"Quite a common name that, but I suppose it will suffice as well as any," said Mr. Brewster.

"Precisely."

A short interval of silence then elapsed. It is quite evident that the two are studying one another; Mr. Brewster because the man is a stranger, and the latter because it is his calling. Finally Mr. Brewster broke the silence by asking:

"You are a detective?"

Smith acknowledged this by simply bowing.

"And you think, Mr. Smith, that you can help me to recover the jewels?"

"I can try——"

"So can any one of you try," quickly interrupted Brewster.

"Let me finish, please," said Smith. "When I try I generally succeed. If you wish my services, give me some points. Tell me who the diamonds belong to. Give me some explicit idea as to their forms, number, and the like. I cannot work in the dark and blindfolded, Mr. Brewster."

"That's a fact. Well, in the first place, the jewels are only family heirlooms. They consist of a pair of bracelets, eardrops, and a necklace. Ah! by the way, I can give you a better idea by these," said Mr. Brewster, taking from a drawer a box. He took the cover off, and there, ensconsed among downy cotton, was a perfect mass of glittering, shimmering jewels. Smith uttered an ejaculation of surprise as his eyes fell upon the sparkling gems.

"You seem surprised, Smith. Well, they are pretty fair counterfeits," said Brewster, as he laid the diamonds upon the table.

"Counterfeits, did you say?" asked Smith as he bent over to examine them.

"Precisely; they are but paste representations. They are the same in size and number as the originals; were made expressly for such an occasion as this. Please examine them closely, Mr. Smith, for by these we must recover the originals."

The detective took the pieces up one by one, and examined them closely. He counted the stones, noticed, the quaint, old-fashioned setting, which was intricate delicate, and a marvel of skilled handiwork.

"And you say these are 'bogus'?"

"Yes, sir. If the originals were here you could then compare the two sets."

"Who usually wore the real ones?"

"My daughter, which was seldom; for she is an invalid, and goes in society but little. Poor Lucy! She does not even know that the diamonds are missing."

"Does not know? What do you mean, Mr. Brewster?"

"The two sets were kept in a secret drawer in my desk at home—the originals in a plain white box; these in a blue box, as you see."

"Precisely. Go on."

"If possible I would like to recover the diamonds before my daughter finds out about the matter. You may proceed in your own manner, Mr. Smith. If you succeed in recovering the jewels and punishing the thief, I shall not hesitate to reward you handsomely."

"Of course, you will allow me to take these," said Smith, pointing to the counterfeits.

"Certainly; they are only paste," said Mr. Brewster, who laid the bogus jewels back into their downy nest.

Smith took the box, rose, buttoned his coat, and turned to leave, when he suddenly asked, as he looked over his shoulder.

"Does your daughter know of the existence of these bogus jewels?"

"She does."

"Let me see—you have a son?" inquired Mr. Smith.

"I have."

"Is he a member of the firm?"

"No, sir."

"What does he do?"

"Sir, my son is a gentleman of leisure."

"That's all; good!" and the door closed behind the officer's form.

Jack Smith was one of the best men in the force. He was sharp, cunning, and knew not the meaning of the word fear. As he wended his way from Harold Brewster's office he began to cogitate, to wonder if there was no possible light ahead concerning the case in hand.

Just as he was about to pass a jewellery store a sudden thought illuminated his mind.

He stepped in, and showing the bogus diamonds to the proprietor, asked him one question.

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When Jack Smith emerged from the door a strange look was upon his face, and he hugged the box more closely to his breast as he threaded the great throng.

Fred Brewster was one of those gay, petted darlings of society, of which London has a surfeit. He toiled not, neither did he spin, yet no one of the fashionable set in which he moved had finer raiment nor spent money more lavishly.

Perhaps if Fred had had some aim in life, his existence would not have been as vapid as it was. But, as the case stood, he was rapidly going to the dogs. He knew it, and his boon companions knew it; but he cared as little for his mistaken career as they did. He was petted by his mother, and sister, and his father condoned his many foibles by saying:

"Let the boy sow his wild oats; he'll settle down soon enough."

The young man gambled, was a frequenter of sporting circles of every description, and did not disdain to bet hundreds of pounds on a single race. Upon the evening following the interview between Harold Brewster and the detective, while Fred was in one of the noted gambling resorts in Soho, he found that a plainly-dressed man of middle-age was watching him closely.

It troubled him exceedingly, and made him careless in his play. The consequence was, when he rose from the table, he found that he had lost one hundred pounds. He went to the bar and called for brandy. After drinking it he took his departure. The middle-aged man who watched him so closely was at his heels.

"Look here, my man," said Fred, turning to the other when the pair had reached the street, "am I such an object of curiosity that you must needs keep your eyes upon me?"

"Be calm, Mr. Fred Brewster. I arrest you in the name of the law," said Jack Smith; for he it was, in one of his many disguises.

"Good Heavens! Arrest me! For what?" gasped the young man, starting back.

"No matter; come with me," simply returned Smith. The young man saw that it would be useless to offer resistance, and so he accompanied the officer. A strange expression of fear came over Fred Brewster's face when the officer told him to step into a pawnshop with him just off the Strand.

"The ticket, please," said Smith.

Fred trembled in every limb; his face was the picture of abject despair.

"What—what do you—mean?" he ejaculated.

"The pawn ticket for the diamonds," whispered the detective.

Fred took his pocket-book out, and extricating the slip of paper from its contents, passed it to Mr. Smith.

"Now, friend Jacob, I'll take that lot of diamonds in the white box, please," said Smith, handing the ticket to the Jew behind the counter.

"Yes, mine frent, but I must haf mine monish, five pounds, and one for de use of de monish," returned the Jew.

Smith handed him the required amount, and took the diamonds. After the pair had reached the street, the detective said to the astonished young man:

"Now, my young man, let me give you a piece of advice; mend your ways; change your manner of living, and be a man for your mother's sake."

"And am I at liberty?" asked Fred, as the other turned to leave.

"You are; go and do the right thing hereafter. But recollect there is one man who knows of your crime, and will not hesitate to use this incident against you if you ever give him occasion."

The next day, Harold Brewster was seated in his office. he was startled by the appearance of Smith, the detective.

"Ah, Smith, I see by your face that you have succeeded."

"I have; there are your diamonds," said Smith, laying the two boxes upon the table.

"I'm so happy! Are they not beauties?" asked Mr. Brewster, lifting the glittering jewels from the white box.

"They are fair," replied Smith smiling.

"Fair! What do you mean? They are worth five thousand pounds. Compare them with these," said Brewster, taking the jewels from the blue box.

"Suppose you tell me which are the originals and the genuine ones," said Smith.

Mr. Brewster looked up quickly and asked:

"What do you mean?"

"Simply this, Mr. Brewster—the real diamonds have not been stolen at all."

"Eh? not stolen? I—bless my soul! What do you mean, man?"

"It is the truth, Mr. Brewster. The boxes must have got changed, or rather the contents. You gave me the real diamonds, but I have recovered the bogus ones."

The listener was so thoroughly astonished that he could not speak at first. Finally he asked:

"How did you learn of it?"

Smith then told the astonished merchant how he had stepped into a jeweller's store and asked the proprietor to examine the jewels and tell him their value. He also told Mr. Brewster how he had found the paste gems in a pawnshop.

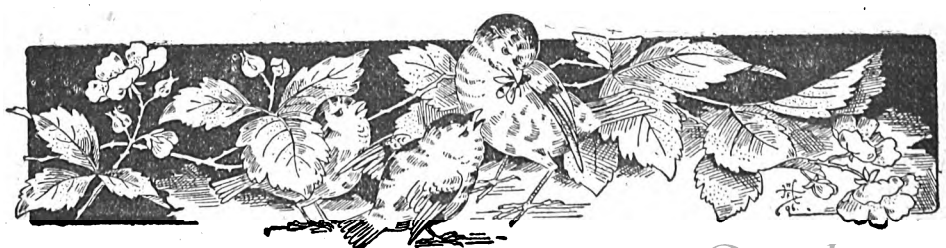
"And did you not capture the thief?" asked Mr. Brewster.

"Don't press that part of the case, Mr. Brewster, please. I think he has had a lesson."

After receiving remuneration for his services the detective took his departure.

Mr. Brewster never questioned his son because of his altered manner of living, but he imagined he knew the reason of Fred's change for the better.

W. C. M.



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THE ANGEL OF THE REVOLUTION

By GEORGE GRIFFITH

CHAPTER LXIII. (*continued*).

THEY descended together to the engine-room, and meanwhile the air-ship sank through the clouds until the lights of Aberdeen lay about a thousand feet below. A lens of red glass had been fitted to the searchlight of the *Ithuriel*, and all that was necessary was to connect the forward engine with the dynamo.

Arnold put Natasha's hand on a little lever. As she took hold of it she thought with a shudder of the mighty forces of destruction which her next movement would let loose. Then she thought of her mother, betrayed, degraded, and murdered amidst the snows of Siberia, of her father crippled in the prime of his life, and of all the nameless horrors of the rule whose death-signal she was about to give.

As she did so her grip tightened on the lever, and when Arnold, having given his orders to the head engineer as to speed and course, put his hand on her shoulder and said, "Now!" she pulled it back with a sharp, determined motion, and the next instant a broad fan of blood-red light shot over the *Ithuriel's* bows.

At the same moment the air-ship's propellers began to spin round, and with the flood of red light streaming in front of her, she headed her way full speed towards Edinburgh. The signal flashed over the Scottish capital, and then the *Ithuriel* swerved round to the westward.

Half-an-hour later Glasgow saw it, and then away she sped southward across the border to Carlisle, and so through the long December night she flew hither and thither, eastward and westward, flashing the red battle-signal over field and village and town, and wherever it shone armed men sprang up like the fruit of the fabled dragon's teeth, companies were mustered in streets and squares and fields and marched to railway stations, and soon long trains, one after another in endless succession, got into motion, all moving towards the south and east, all converging upon London.

Last of all, after it had made a swift circuit of northern and central and western England, the red light swept along the south coast, and then swerved northward again till it flashed thrice over London, and then it vanished into the darkness of the hour before the dawn of Armageddon.

Since the ever-memorable night of Thursday, the 29th of July, 1588, three hundred and sixteen years before, when "The beacon blazed upon the roof of Edgcumbe's lofty Hall," and the answering fires sprang up "From Eddystone to Berwick bounds, from Lynn to Milford Bay," to tell that the Spanish Armada was in sight, there had been no such night in England, nor had men ever dreamed that there should be.

But great as had been the deeds done by the heroes of the sixteenth century with the pigmy means at their command, they were but the merest child's play to the awful storm of destruction which, in a few hours, was to burst over southern England. Then it was England against Spain; now it was Anglo-Saxondom against the world; and the conquering race of earth, armed with the most terrific powers of destruction that human wit had ever devised, was rising in its wrath, millions strong, to wipe out the stain of invasion from the sacred soil of the Motherland of the Anglo-Saxon nations.

CHAPTER LXIV.

THE OLD LION AT BAY.

THE morning of the 6th of December dawned grey and cold over London and the hosts that were waiting for its surrender. Scarcely any smoke rose from the myriad chimneys of the vast city, for the coal was almost all burnt, and what was left was selling at £12 a ton. Wood was so scarce that people were tearing up the wood-work of their houses to keep a little fire going.

So the steel-grey sky remained clear, for towards daybreak the clouds had been condensed by a cold north-easter into a sharp fall of fine, icy snow, and as the sun gained power it shone chilly over the whitened landscape, the innumerable roofs of London, and the miles of tents lining the hills to the north and south of the Thames valley.

The havoc wrought by the bombardment on the public buildings of the great city had been terrible. Of the Houses of Parliament only a shapeless heap of broken stones remained, the Law Courts were in ruins, what had been the Albert Hall was now a roofless ring of blackened walls, Nelson's Column lay shattered across Trafalgar Square, and the Royal Exchange, the Bank of England, and the Mansion House mingled their fragments in the heart of the almost deserted City.

Only three of the great buildings of London had suffered no damage. These were the British Museum, Westminster Abbey, and St. Paul's, which had been spared in accordance with special orders issued by the commanders of the League. The two former were spared for the same reason that the Germans had spared Strasburg Cathedral in 1870—because their destruction would have been a loss, not to Britain alone, but to the world.

The great church of the metropolis had been left untouched chiefly because it had been arranged that, on the fall of London, the Tsar was to be proclaimed Emperor of Asia under its dome, and at the same time General le Gallifet was to assume the Dictatorship of France and abolish the Republic, which for more than ten years had been the plaything of unprincipled financiers and the laughing-stock of Europe. As the sun rose the great golden cross, rising high out of the wilderness of houses, shone more and more brightly under the brightening sky, and millions of eyes looked upon it from within the City and from without with feelings far asunder as triumph and defeat.

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At daybreak the last meal had been eaten by the defenders of the City. To supply it almost every animal left in London had been sacrificed, and the last drop of liquor was drunk, even to the last bottle of wine in the Royal cellars, which the King shared with his two commanders-in-chief, Lord Roberts and Lord Wolseley, in the presence of the troops on the balcony of Buckingham Palace.

At nine o'clock the King and Queen attended service in St. Paul's, and when they left the Cathedral half-an-hour later the besiegers on the heights were astounded to hear the bells of all the steeples left standing in London ring out in a triumphant series of peals which rippled away eastward and westward from St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey, caught up and carried on by steeple after steeple, until from Highgate to Dulwich, and from Hammersmith to Canning Town, the beleagured and starving city might have been celebrating some great triumph or deliverance.

The astonished besiegers could only put the extraordinary manifestation down to joy on the part of the citizens at the near approaching end of the siege, but before the bells of London had been ringing for half-an-hour this fallacious idea was dispelled from their minds in a very stern and summary fashion.

Since nightfall there had been no communication with the secret agents of the League in the various towns of England and Scotland. At ten o'clock a small company of Cossacks spurred and flogged their jaded horses up the northern slope of Muswell Hill, on which the Tsar had fixed his headquarters. Nearly every man was wounded, and the horses were in the last stages of exhaustion.

Their captain was at once admitted to the presence of the Tsar, and, flinging himself on the ground before the enraged Autocrat, gasped out the dreadful tidings that his little company were the sole survivors of the army of occupation that had been left at Harwich, and which, twelve hours before, had been thirty thousand strong.

A huge fleet of strange-looking vessels flying a plain blood-red flag had just before forced the approaches to the harbour, sunk every transport and warship with guns that were fired without flame, or smoke, or report, and whose projectiles shattered everything that they struck. Immediately afterwards an immense flotilla of transports had steamed in, and, under the protection of these terrible guns, had landed a hundred thousand men, all dressed in the same plain grey uniform, with no facings or ornaments save a knot of red ribbon at the button-hole, and armed with magizine rifle and a bayonet, and a brace of revolvers. All were English by their speech, and every man appeared to know exactly what to do with very few orders from his officers.

This invading force had hunted the Russians out of Harwich like rabbits out of a warren, while the ships in the harbour had hurled their shells up into the air so that they fell back to earth on the retreating army and exploded with frightful effect. The general in command had at once telegraphed to London for a detachment of war-balloons and reinforcements, but no response had been received.

After four hours' fighting the Russian Army was in full retreat, while the attacking force was constantly increasing as transport after transport steamed into the harbour and landed her men. At Colchester the Russians had been met by another vast army which had apparently sprung from the earth, dressed and armed exactly as the invading force was. What its numbers were there was no possibility of telling.

By this time, too, treachery began to show itself in the Russian ranks, and whole companies suddenly appeared with the red knot of ribbon in their tunics, and instantly turned their weapons against their comrades, shooting them down without warning or mercy. No quarter had been given to those who did not show the ribbon. Most of them died fighting, but those who had thrown down their arms were shot down all the same.

Whoever commanded the strange army had manifestly given orders to take no prisoners, and it was equally certain that its movements were directed by the Terrorists, for everywhere the battle cries had been, "In the Master's name!" and "Slay and spare not!"

The whole of the army, save the deserters, had been destroyed, and the deserters had immediately assumed the grey uniforms of those of the Terrorist army who had fallen. The Cossack captain and his forty or fifty followers were the sole remains of a body of three thousand men who had fought their way through the second army. The whole country to the north and east seemed alive with the grey soldiery, and it was only after a hundred hair-breadth escapes that they had managed to reach the protection of the lines round London.

Such was the tale of the bringer of bad tidings to the Tsar at the moment when he was looking forward to the crowning triumph of his reign. Like the good soldier that he was, he wasted no time in thinking at a moment when everything depended on instant action.

He at once despatched a war-balloon to the French and Italian headquarters with a note containing the terrible news from Harwich, and requesting Generals le Gallifet and Cosenz to lose no time in communicating with the eastern and southern ports, and in throwing out corps of observation, supported by war-balloons. Evidently the American Government had played the League false at the last moment, and had allied herself with Britain.

As soon as he had sent off this message, the Tsar ordered a fleet of forty aerostats to proceed to the north-eastward in advance of a force of infantry and cavalry numbering three hundred thousand men, and supported by fifty batteries of field and machine-guns, which he detached to stop the progress of the Federation army towards London.

Before this force was in motion a reply came back from General le Gallifet to the effect that all communication with the south and east was stopped, and that an aerostat, which had been on scout duty during the night, had returned with the news that the whole country appeared to be up in arms from Portsmouth to Dover. Corps of observation and a fleet of thirty aerostats had been sent out, and three army corps were already on the march to the south and east.

Meanwhile, the hour for the surrender of London was drawing very near, and all the while the bells were sending their mingled melody of peals and carillons up into the clear frosty air with a defiant joyousness that seemed to speak of anything but surrender. As twelve o'clock approached the guns of all the batteries on the heights were loaded and trained on different parts of the city, and the whole of the forces left after the detachment of the armies that had been sent to engage the battalions of the Federation prepared to descend upon the devoted city from all sides after the two hours' incessant bombardment that had been ordered to precede the general attack.

It had been arranged that if the city surrendered a white flag was to be hoisted on the cross of St. Paul's.

Within a few minutes of twelve the Tsar ascended to the roof of the Alexandra Palace on Muswell Hill, and turned his field glasses on the towering dome. His face and lips were bloodless with repressed but intense anxiety, but the hands that held the glasses to his eyes were as steady as though he had been watching a review of his own troops.

It was the supreme moment of his victorious career. He was practically master of Europe. Only Britain held out. The relieving forces would be rent in fragments by his war-balloons, and then decimated by his troops as the legions of Germany and Austria had been. The capital of the English-speaking world lay starving at his feet, and a few minutes would see——

Ha! there goes the flag at last. A little ball of white bunting creeps up from the gallery over the dark dome. It clears the railing under the pedestal, and climbs to the apex of the shining cross. As it does so the wild chorus of the bells suddenly ceases, and out of the silence that follows

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some the deep booming strokes of the great bell of St. Paul's sounding the hour of twelve.

As the last stroke dies away the ball bursts, and the White Ensign of Britain crossed by the red cross of St. George, and with the Jack in the corner, floats out defiantly on the breeze, greeted by the re-awakening clamour of the bells, and a deep hoarse cry from millions of throats, that rolls like a vast sea of sound up the slopes to the encampments of the League.

With an irrepressible cry of rage, Alexander dashed his field-glass to the ground, and shouted, in a voice broken with passion:

"So! They have tricked us. Let the bombardment begin at once, and bring that flag down with the first shots!"

But before the words were out of his mouth the bombardment had already commenced in a very different fashion from that in which he had intended that it should begin. So intense had been the interest with which all eyes had been turned on the Cross of St. Paul's that no one had noticed twelve little points of shining light hanging high in air over the batteries of the besiegers, six to the north and six to the south.

But the moment that the Ensign of St. George floated from the summit of St. Paul's a rapid series of explosions roared out like a succession of thunderclaps along the lines of the batteries. The hills of Surrey, and Kent, and Middlesex were suddenly transformed into volcanoes spouting flame and thick black smoke, and flinging clouds of dust and fragments of darker objects high into the air.

The order of the Tsar was obeyed in part only, for by the time that the word to recommence the bombardment had been flashed round the circuit of the entrenchments more than half the batteries had been put out of action. The twelve air-ships stationed at equal intervals round the vast ellipse, and discharging their No. 3 shell from their four guns ahead and astern, from an elevation of four thousand feet, had simultaneously wrecked half the batteries of the besiegers before their occupants had any clear idea of what was really happening.

Wherever one of those shells fell and burst, earth, and stone, and iron melted into dust under the terrific force of the exploding gases, and the air-ships, moving with a velocity compared with which the utmost speed of the aerostats was as a snail's pace, flitted hither and thither wherever a battery got into action and destroyed it before the second round had been fired.

There were still twenty-five aerostats at the command of the Tsar which had not been sent against the relieving forces, and as soon as it was realised that the aeriel bombardment of the batteries came from the air-ships of the Terrorist fleet they were sent into the air to engage them at all hazards. They outnumbered them two to one, but there was no comparison between the manœuvring powers of the two aerial squadrons.

As soon as the aerostats rose into the air the Terrorist fleet receded northward and southward from the batteries. Their guns had a six-mile range, and it did not matter to them which side of the assailed area they lay. They could still hurl their explosives with the same deadly precision on the appointed mark. But with the aerostats it was a very different matter. They could only drop their shells vertically, and where they were not exactly above the object of attack, their shells exploded with comparative harmlessness.

Thus the Terrorist fleet, sweeping hither and thither, in wide and ever-changing curves, lured the most dangerous foes of the beleagured city farther and farther away from the real scene of action at the very time when they were most urgently needed to support the attacking forces which at that moment were being poured into London.

To destroy the air-ships seemed an impossibility, since they could move at five times the speed of the swiftest aerostat, and yet to return to the bombardment of the city was to leave them free to commit what havoc they pleased upon the encampments of the armies of the League. So they were drawn farther and farther away, while their agile enemies, still keeping within their six-mile range, evaded their shells, and yet kept up a constant discharge of their own projectiles upon the salient points of the attack on London.

By four o'clock in the afternoon all the batteries of the besiegers had been put out of action by the aerial bombardment. It was now a matter of man to man and steel to steel, and so the gauge of final battle was accepted, and as dusk began to fall over the beleagured city the Russian, French, and Italian hosts left their lines and descended from their vantage ground to the assault on London, where the old Lion at bay was waiting for them with claws bared and teeth grinning defiance.

CHAPTER LXV.

The Turn of the Battle-Tide.

The force which the Tsar had detached to operate against the Federation Army of the North left the headquarters at eleven o'clock and proceeded in four main divisions by Edmonton, Chingford, Chigwell, and Romford. The aerostats, regulating their speed so as to keep touch with the land force, maintained a position two miles ahead of it at three thousand feet elevation.

Strict orders had been given to press on at the utmost speed and to use every means to discover the Federationists and bring them to an engagement with as little delay as possible, but they marched on hour after hour into the dusk of the early winter evening with the sounds of battle growing fainter in their rear without meeting with a sign of the enemy.

As it would have been the height of imprudence to have advanced in the dark into a hostile country occupied by an enemy of great but unknown strength, General Pralitzin, the Commander of the Russian force, decided to bring his men to a halt at nightfall, and therefore took up a series of positions between Cheshunt, Epping, Chipping Ongar, and Ingatestone. From these points squadrons of Cossacks scoured the country in all directions, north, east, and west, in search of the so far invisible enemy; and at the same time he sent mounted messengers back to headquarters to report that no enemy had been found, and to ask for further orders.

The aerostats slowed down their engines until their propellers just counteracted the force of the wind, and they hung motionless at a height of a thousand feet, ranged in a semi-circle about fifteen miles long over the heads of the columns.

All this time the motions of the Russian army had been watched by the captain of the *Ithuriel* from an elevation of eight thousand feet five miles to the rear. As soon as he saw them making preparations for a halt, and had noticed the disposition of the aerostats, he left the conning-tower which he had occupied nearly all day, and went into the after-saloon, where he found Natas and Natasha examining a large plan of London and its environs.

"They have come to a halt at last," he said, "and if they only remain where they are for three hours longer, we have the whole army like rats in a trap, war-balloons and all. They have not seen us so far, for if they had they would certainly have sent an aerostat aloft to reconnoitre, and, of course, I must have destroyed it. The whole forty are arranged in a semi-circle over the heads of the four main columns in divisions of ten."

"And what do you propose to do with them now you have got them?" said Natasha, looking up with a welcoming smile.

"Give me a cup of coffee first, for I am cold to the marrow, and then I'll tell you," replied Arnold, seating himself at the table, on which stood a coffee-urn with a spirit lamp beneath it, something after the style of a Russian samovar.

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Natasha filled a cup and passed it to him, and he went on:

"You remember what I said to Tremayne in the Princess's sitting-room at Petersburg about the eagle and the crows just before the trial of the Tsar's first war-balloons. Well, if you like to spend a couple of hours with me in the conning-tower as soon as it is dark enough for us to descend I will show you what I meant then. I suppose the original general orders stand good?" he said, turning to Natas.

"Yes," replied the Master gravely. "They must all be destroyed. This is the day of vengeance and not of mercy. If my orders have been obeyed, all the men belonging to the International in this force will have managed to get to the ear by nightfall. They can be left to take care of themselves. Mazanoff assured me that all the members in the armies of the League fully understood what they are to do. Some of the war-balloons have been taken possession of by our men, and we don't know how many. As soon as you destroy the first of the fleet, these will rise and commence operations on the army, and they will also fly the red flag, so there will be no fear of your mistaking them."

"Very well," said Arnold, who had been quietly sipping his coffee while he listened to the utterance of this death sentence on more than a quarter of a million of men. "If our fellows to the northward only obey orders promptly, there will not be many of the Russians left by sunrise. Now, Natasha, you had better put on your furs and come to the conning-tower; it's about time to begin."

It did not take her many moments to wrap up, and within five minutes she and Arnold were standing in the conning-tower watching the camp fires of the Russian host coming nearer and nearer as the *Ithuriel* sank down through the rapidly increasing darkness towards the long dotted line which marked the position of the aerostats, whose great gas-holders stood out black and distinct against the whitened earth beneath them.

By means of electric signals to the engineers the captain of the *Ithuriel* was able to regulate both the speed and the elevation of the air-ship as readily as though he had himself been in charge of the engine-room. Giving Natasha a pair of night glasses, and telling her to keep a bright look-out ahead, he brought the *Ithuriel* round by the westward to a position about five miles west of the extremity of the line of war-balloons, and as soon as he got on a level with it he advanced comparatively slowly until Natasha was able to make it out distinctly with the night glass.

Then he signalled to the wheel-house aft to disconnect the after-wheel, and at the same moment he took hold of the spokes of the forward wheel in the conning-tower. The next signal was "Full speed ahead," and as the *Ithuriel* gathered way and rushed forward on her errand of destruction he said hurriedly to Natasha:

"Now don't speak till it's over. I want all my wits for this work, and you'll want all your eyes."

Without speaking Natasha glanced up at his face, and saw on it somewhat of the same expression that she had seen at the moment when he put the *Ariel* at the rock-wall which barred the entrance to Aeria. His face was pale, and his lips were set, and his eyes looked straight out from under his frowning brows with an angry gleam in them that boded ill for the fate of those against whom he was about to use the irresistible engine of destruction under his command.

Twenty feet in front of them stretched out the long keen ram of the air-ship, edged and pointed like a knife. This was the sole weapon that he intended to use. It was impossible to train the guns at the tremendous speed at which the *Ithuriel* was travelling, but under the circumstance the ram was the deadliest weapon that could have been employed.

In four minutes from the time the *Ithuriel* started on her eastward course the nearest war-balloon was only fifty yards away. The air-ship, travelling at a speed of nearly two hundred miles an hour, leapt out of the dusk like a flash of white light. In ten seconds more her ram had passed completely through the gasholder without so much as a shock being felt. The next one was only five hundred yards away. Obedient to her rudder the *Ithuriel* swerved, ripped her gasholder from end to end, and then darted upon the next one even before a terrific explosion in their rear told that the car of the first one had struck the earth.

So she sped along the whole line, darting hither and thither in obedience to the guiding hand that controlled her, with such inconceivable rapidity that before any of the unwieldy machines, saving only those whose occupants had been prepared for the assault, had time to get out of the way of the destroying ram, she had rent her way through the gas-holders of twenty-eight out of the forty balloons and flung them to the earth to explode and spread consternation and destruction all along the van of the army encamped below.

From beginning to end the attack had not lasted ten minutes. When the last of the aerostats had gone down under his terrible ram Arnold signalled "Stop and ascend," to the engine-room. A second signal turned on the search-light in the bow, and from this a rapid series of flashes were sent up to the sky to the northward and eastward.

The effect was as fearful as it was instantaneous. The twelve war-balloons which had escaped by flying the red flag took up their positions above the Russian lines, and began to drop their fire-shell and cyanogen bombs upon the masses of men below. The air-ship, swerving round again to the westward, with her fan wheels aloft, moved slowly across the wild area over which men and horses were wildly rushing hither and thither in vain attempts to escape the rain of death that was falling upon them from the sky.

Her search-light, turned downwards to the earth, sought out the spots where they were crowded most thickly together, and then the air-ship's guns came into play also. Arnold had given orders to use the new fire-shell exclusively, and its effects proved to be frightful beyond description. Wherever one fell a blaze of intense light shone for an instant upon the earth. Then this burst into a thousand fragments, which leapt into the air and spread themselves far and wide in all directions, burning with inextinguishable fury for several minutes, and driving men and horses mad with agony and terror.

No human fortitude or discipline could withstand the fearful rain of fire, in comparison with which even the deadly hail from the aerostats seemed insignificant. For half-an-hour the eight guns of the *Ithuriel* hurled these awful projectiles in all directions, scattering death and hopeless confusion wherever they alighted, until the whole field of carnage seemed ablaze with them.

At the end of this time three rockets soared up from her deck into the dark sky, and burst into myriads of brilliant white stars, which for a few moments shed an unearthly light upon the scene of indescribable confusion and destruction below. But they made more than this visible, for by their momentary light could be seen seemingly interminable lines of grey-clad figures swiftly closing in from all sides, chasing the Cossack scouts before them in upon the completely disorganised Russian host.

A few minutes later a continuous roll of musketry burst out on front, flank, and rear, and a ceaseless hail of rifle bullets began to plough its way through the helpless masses of the soldiers of the Tsar. They formed as well as they could to confront these new enemies, but the moment that the search-light of the air-ship, constantly sweeping the field, fell upon a company in anything like order a shell descended in the midst of it and broke it up again.

All night long the work of death and vengeance went on, the grey lines ever closing nearer and nearer upon the dwindling remnants of the Russian army. Hour after hour the hail of bullets never slackened. There was no random firing on the part of the Federation soldiers. Every man had been trained to use his rifle rapidly but deliberately,

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and never to fire until he had found his mark; and the consequence was that the long nickel-tipped bullets, fired point-blank into the dense masses of men, rent their way through half-a-dozen bodies before they were spent.

At last the grey light began to break over such a scene of carnage as human eyes had never before gazed upon. Scarcely ten thousand men remained of the three hundred thousand who had started the day before in obedience to the order of the Tsar; and these were split up into formless squads and ragged companies fighting desperately, amidst heaps of corpses, for dear life, without any pretence at order or formation.

The cannonade from the air had ceased, and the last scene in the drama of death had come. With bayonets fixed and rifles lowered to the charge, the long grey lines closed up, and, as the bugles rang out the long-awaited order, they swept forward at the double, horses and men went down like a field of standing corn under the irresistible rush of half a million bayonets, and in twenty minutes all was over. Not a man of the whole Russian army was left alive, save those whose knot of red ribbon at the button-hole proclaimed them members of the International.

As soon as it was light enough for Arnold to see clearly that the fate of the Russians was finally decided, he descended to the earth, and, after complimenting the commander and officers of the Federation troops on the splendid effectiveness of their force, and their admirable discipline and coolness, he gave orders for a two hours' rest and then a march on the Russian headquarters at Muswell Hill with every available man. The Tsar and his staff were to be taken alive at all hazards; every other Russian who did not wear the International ribbon was to be shot down without mercy.

These orders given, the *Ithuriel* mounted into the air again and disappeared in the direction of London. She passed over the now shattered and silent entrenchments of the Russians at a speed which made it possible to remain on deck without discomfort or danger and at an elevation of two thousand feet. Natas was below in the saloon, alone with his own thoughts, the thoughts of twenty-five years of waiting and working and gradual approach to the hour of vengeance which was now so near. Andrew Smith was steering in the wheel-house, Lieutenant Marston was taking his watch below, after being on deck nearly the whole of the previous night, and Arnold and Natasha, wrapped in their warm furs, were pacing up and down the deck engaged in conversation which had not altogether to do with the war.

The sun had risen before the *Ithuriel* passed over London, and through the clear, cold air they could see with their field-glasses signs of carnage and destruction which made Natasha's soul sicken within her to gaze upon them, and even shook Arnold's now hardened nerves.

All the main thoroughfares leading into London from the north and south were choked with heaps of dead bodies in Russian, French, and Italian uniforms, in the midst of which those who still survived were being forced forward by the pressure of those behind. Every house that remained standing was spouting flames upon them from its windows, and where the streets opened into squares and wider streets there were barricades manned by British and Federation troops, and from their summits and loopholes the quick-firing guns were raining an incessant hail of shot and shell upon the struggling masses pent up in the streets.

A horrible chorus of the rattle of small arms, the harsh, grinding roar of the machine guns, the hurrahs of the defenders, and the cries of rage and agony from the baffled and decimated assailants rose unceasingly to their ears as they passed over the last battlefield of the western nations, where the Anglo-Saxon, the Russ, and the Gaul, were locked in the death struggle.

"There is some awful work going on down there," said Arnold, as they headed away towards the south, where,

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Address all envelopes to "War Editor," Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Pretoria Coupon, S.S.] *Feb. 3, 1900.*

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Day..... *Hour*.....

(Pretoria Time.)

We shall take it that competitors mean the year 1900 unless they state otherwise.

This notice and coupon also appears every week in the ILLUSTRATED WAR NEWS, HOME NOTES, SUNDAY READER, PASTIMES, PEARSON'S WEEKLY, and the BIG BUDGET.

Readers of SHORT STORIES may enter with this Coupon.

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from behind the Surrey hills soon came the sound of some tremendous conflict. "For the present we must leave them to fight it out. They don't seem to have had such easy work of it to the south as we have had to the north, but I didn't expect they would, for they have probably detached a very much larger force of French and Italians to attack the Army of the South than the Russian lot we had to deal with."

"Is all this frightful slaughter really necessary?" asked Natasha, slipping her arm through his and looking up at him with eyes which for the first time were moistened by the tears of pity for her enemies.

"Necessary or not," replied Arnold, "it is the Master's orders, and I have only to obey them. This is the day of vengeance for which he has waited so long, and you can hardly expect him to show much mercy. It lies between him and Tremayne. For my part I will stay my hand only when I am ordered to do so.

"Still, if anyone can influence Natas to mercy, you can. Nothing can now stop the slaughter on the north, I'm afraid, for the Russians are caught in a hopeless trap. The Londoners are enraged beyond control, and if the men spared them I believe the women would tear them to pieces. But there are two millions of lives or so to be saved at the south, and perhaps there is still time to do it. It would be a task worthy of the Angel of the Revolution; why should you not try it?"

"I will do so," said Natasha, and without another word she turned away and walked quickly towards the entrance to the saloon.

(To be continued.)

Said One Shopper: "Oh, I saw just the loveliest, sweetest, prettiest baby a minute ago."

Said the Other Shopper: "What! Do you mean to tell me that stupid nurse has dared to bring out my little darling such a day as this?"

"Did you know that I passed your door last evening?" said the young man tenderly.

"Of course," replied the beautiful girl, with reproach in her glistening eyes. "Do you think I would not know your step?"

"Certainly," said the happy young man, as he directed the conversation away from the subject, and avoided remarking that he had passed the door in a cab.

WHAT A GLORIOUS DAY
IT WILL BE WHEN
THE BRITISH FLAG
FLOATS OVER PRETORIA!
ALSO
WHAT A GLORIOUS DAY
IT WILL BE FOR
THE READER OF SHORT STORIES
WHO SCOOPS THE £250
OFFERED FOR
NAMING THAT DAY!

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM COMPETITIONS.

Nos. 1—11.

No. 1.—First prize of 10s. has been awarded to Mr. W. J. Barter, of 38 Douglas Street, Cork, Ireland. A solid silver pencil-case to each of the following: Miss May Philips, Balham, S.W.; A. Pirrie, Perth; J. M. Child, Swansea; Miss B. Tregilgas, Stonehouse, Devon; A. H. Hamilton, Tufnell Park, N.

No. 2.—First prize of 10s. has been awarded to Mr. W. W. Howells, of 113 Exchange, Cardiff. A copy of "Francois the Valet," by G. W. Appleton, to: C. T. Chiswell, Torpoint, Cornwall; Miss Wiggins, Hereford; E. Martin, Epsom, Surrey; P. J. H. Woods, Norwich; H. Grindall, Birmingham.

No. 3.—First prize of 10s. has been awarded to Mr. T. H. Lawless, of 36 Greenfield Road, St. Helens. A solid silver pencil-case to each of the following: W. M. Cockburn, Paisley; J. Kean, Edinburgh; W. A. Billingham, Nottingham; R. M. Hopkins, R.N., Dartmouth; G. F. Matthews, Chichester.

No. 4.—First prize of 10s. has been awarded to Mr. A. H. L. Smith, of 5 Farm Road, Hove, Brighton. A copy of "Guilty Gold," by Headon Hill, to each of the following: Miss Richardson, Bedale; A. Ward, Portsmouth; Dav. Ryan, jun., Dublin; Miss K. Zerfahs, Upper Holloway, N.; Rev. S. Yelland Richards, Cardiff.

No. 5.—First prize of 10s. has been awarded to Mr. J. F. Spencer, 134 Rice Lane, Walton, Liverpool. A solid silver pencil-case to each of the following: A. H. Tyler, Lowestoft; Geo. Templeton, Belfast; Miss A. Sweet, Taunton; Miss O'Connor, Wolverhampton; E. Gregory, Manchester.

No. 6.—First prize of 10s. has been awarded to Mr. Granville P. Higgs, of "St. Elmo," Lancaster Avenue, Hadley Wood, Middlesex. A copy of "Athelstane Ford," by Allen Upward, to each of the following: K. Moyse, Windsor; R. Parry, Cheadle, Gloucester; Jos. Marshall, Hastings; R. Patterson, Newcastle-on-Tyne; T. Lawson Alexander, Edinburgh.

No. 7.—First prize of 10s. has been awarded to Miss Mabel Laws, of 22 Marlborough Row, Portsea, Portsmouth. A solid silver pencil-case to each of the following: J. B. Whitlock, East Dulwich; C. Osborn, Norwich; J. H. Cockerill, London, N.; J. J. McCormick, Dublin; Miss B. Rendle, Devonport.

No. 8.—First prize of 10s. has been awarded to Mr. Jas. H. Baker, of 59 Greyfriars Lane, Coventry. A copy of "Fortune's My Foe," by J. Bloundelle Burton, has been sent to each of the following: W. H Lomas, Manchester; P. H. Lewis, Stoke-on-Trent; John Boyd, Glasgow; W. S. Moss, Birkenhead; Miss A. Walker, Whitby, Yorkshire.

No. 9.—First prize of 10s. has been awarded to Mr. Jas. Mitchell, of 5 Belfield Terrace, Musselburgh. A solid silver pencil-case has gone to: Jas. Matthews, Chiswich, W.; J. White, Liverpool; A. Vane, Rochdale; J. E. Donnelly, Swansea; E. Holdsworth, Bradford.

No. 10.—First prize of 10s. has been awarded to Miss Dove, of Woodcroft, Malmesbury Road, South Woodford. A copy of the "An Incidental Bishop," by Grant Allen, to: H. B. Thompson, Bracknell, Berks; R. Wells, Uppingham; Miss E. M. Cramphorn, Leytonstone, Essex; Mrs. Symons, Thornton Heath; Miss M. Pitman, Guildford.

No. 11.—First prize of 10s. has been awarded to Mr. W. Harvey Bailey, of 54 Milton Street, Westoe, South Shields. A solid silver pencil-case to: C. W. Anderson, Hatcham, S.E.; Mrs. M. A. Taylor, Sunbury Common; J. Pletts, Chelmsford; J. Henderson, jun., Perth; W. Wilkinson, Blackburn.

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The Brain Gymnasium.

On this page, under the title, "The Brain Gymnasium," appear each week a series of puzzles calculated to occupy the attention of the competitors, with interest and profit to themselves, during the long winter evenings. Many of the tasks set will be comparatively easy of solution, while others will be designed with a view to taxing the abilities of the most proficient in this direction.

In these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the sender of the greatest number of correct solutions, and to the senders of the ten next highest number of c rrect ones will be presented either one of our silver-plated pencil cases or a copy of a popular six-shilling novel. Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, Short Stories, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by Monday, February 5th, 1900.

No. 28.

Make eleven strokes to express the difference between two words, one of which is the name of a game, and the other "to whirl."

No. 29.

Replace words signifying "to fasten" and "disjointed" with words having the same meanings, add a personal pronoun, and a well-known American geographical name will be formed.

No. 30.

My First consists of countless particles;
My Second has neither beginning nor end;
My Third delights a hungry man;
My Whole is a place made famous by royalty.

No. 31.

What well-known line by Pope is hidden in the following:

A A A A E E E 50 G G G H I I I 50 I N N N N O R 50 R S S T T T U 500.

No. 32.

Form a word-square from the following letters so that one of the diagonals signifies "achievement":

A A A A A D D E E K R R R R R W.

No. 33.

C
D Rearrange E
E the surrounding I
I letters so that, commen- L
K cing from one corner, a well- L
N known author's name and the O
title of one of his works can be read.
R S S T T V W

SOLUTIONS TO COMPETITIONS

Appearing in No. 576, January 13th, 1900.

No. 12.

Pontefract.
Hull.
Taunton.
Halifax.
Ipswich.
Sandringham.
Itchen.
Salisbury.

No. 13.

Sprints, Spins, Pin.

No. 14.

PENny.
trAde.
teNet.
siDle.
drINK.

No. 15.

ArBour.
Ship.
TeRm.
OsMund.
Noise.
VaNity.
InGlorious.
LaHore.
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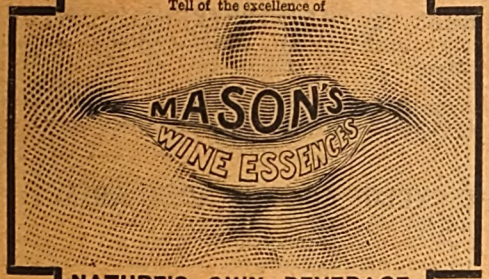

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10	Pianos, value £40 each	400 0 0
20	American Organs, value £20 each	400 0 0
20	Ladies' Bicycles, value £10 each	200 0 0
50	Jones' Sewing Machines value £8 each	400 0 0
50	Sellers' Labour-saving Washers, with Rubber Wringer complete, value £3 each	150 0 0
50	Gents' Gold-filled Waltham Lever (Keyless) Watches, value £2 10 - each	125 0 0
50	Cash Prizes of £2 each	100 0 0
300	Ladies' Sterling Silver Watches, value 30/- each	450 0 0
300	Cash Prizes of £1 each	300 0 0
700	Gents' Umbrellas, value 15/- each	525 0 0
700	Ladies' Umbrellas, value 15/- each	525 0 0
300	Silver-plated Cruets, value 10/- each	150 0 0
500	Ladies' Gun-metal Watches, value 10/- each	250 0 0
500	Gents' Gun-metal Watches, value 10/- each	250 0 0
300	Ladies' Umbrellas, value 7/6 each	112 10 0
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4,500	Pictures of the famous "Charge of the Light Brigade," in gilt frame, value 4/- each	900 0 0
10,000		**£5,667 6 0**

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CONDITIONS OF COMPETITION.

Every Bar of **Watson's Matchless Cleanser** is enclosed in a Wrapper, with signature up the centre of same. Save the WHOLE Wrapper (tops of Wrappers will be disqualified), and send, postage or carriage paid, to **Joseph Watson & Sons Limited, Whitehall Soap Works, Leeds,** not later than MARCH 31ST, 1900. If any parcel arrives, postage or carriage not being fully paid, such parcel will be refused. Be careful to see that the postage is paid. The prizes will be awarded in the above order to the senders of the highest numbers of Wrappers. Each parcel sent in must contain the full name and address of sender, and number of Wrappers sent in must be marked on the same paper. On outside of parcel write leribly "**Prize Competition.**" Full result of Competition will be enclosed with each prize. Every wrapper must have first contained soap. No employees of Joseph Watson & Sons Limited will be eligible. All prizes will be dispatched about the 20th day of the month following the Competition.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY
C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 580. FOR WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 10TH, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

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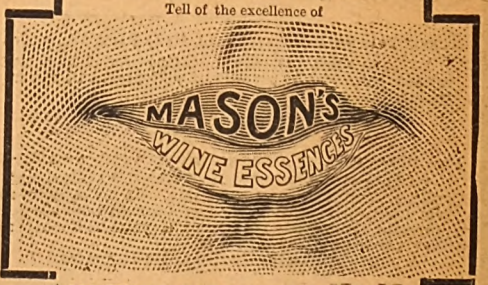

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Agents Wanted.

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SHORT STORIES

No. 580.] [One Penny.

For the Week Ending February 10th, 1900.

THE IRON OF REMORSE.

It is never well to be too sure what you would do under given circumstances, until you have tried and found out. A course of action which you know to be absolutely foreign to every instinct within you—when you sit down to reason about it, after the manner of the age—may be the very one you will follow when there is no time for reason. If any one had told Mackworth that under fire he would be a coward, Mackworth would have knocked the informant down then and there, and have reflected upon the danger to his commission afterwards.

Mackworth had passed though his course with credit and took a commission in the Canadian Mounted Police.

Excepted after the manner of cadets—which is not to be taken seriously—Mackworth had not let women enter into his scheme of existence. His ideals were of another sort just then. He was young and full of belief and things, and he thought that the way to win approval of his superiors and the gratitude of his country, was to avoid wirepulling and to kill the enemies of his Queen.

Therefore, he rejoiced greatly when, after only six weeks of his thoroughly undesirable garrison, he was ordered out in the field to suppress a rebellious tribe of Indians under their chief, Chatta. He had had his kit all rolled in a rubber poncho, and his mess chest pretty well stocked for the whole of the six weeks. He believed that a soldier should be always in readiness. He believed so many things then—though before long the bottom fell out of his universe, and he was filled with an enduring scepticism. And this was how it came about:

The first time he was under fire was when they were caught at rather a disadvantage by the Indians in a difficult pass. The fight began about dusk and lasted well into the night. It may have been the result of some bugaboo stories of his babyhood, which had fostered an unconquerable fear of the dark; it may have been some lurking instinct, or it may have been just blue funk which overcame him. Whatever it was, he hid behind a boulder, crouched and cowered there, trembling so that his revolver fell from his hands.

And Morley, his captain, found him so.

"What are you doing?" he demanded. He was an Irishman and a soldier of the old school, but he did not swear.

Mackworth knew, from that, how bad it was. He scrambled up and babbled.

"Get out of there!" the captain said. He would have used a better tone to one of the troop curs.

Mackworth felt for his revolver and got out, staggering, but no longer afraid, only ashamed—sickeningly ashamed—beyond all endurance.

He tried hard to get himself killed after that. He walked up and down in front of his men, giving orders and smoking cigarettes, and doing his best to serve as a target.

The captain watched him and began to understand. His frown relaxed.

"You'd better get under cover," he suggested; "you are taking needless risks."

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Mackworth looked at him with wide, blank eyes, and did not answer. His face was not only white now: it was grey and set, like the face of a corpse.

Morley's heart softened.

"It's only a baby, anyway," he said to himself, "and it is unhappy out of all proportion." And presently he went to him again. "Will you get under cover, Mackworth?" he insisted.

"No," said the lieutenant, "I won't."

The captain did not mince his words now, and spoke fiercely:

"I order you back under cover, sir!"

Mackworth glanced at him and went on smoking. Morley did not fancy his own position, arguing with a green boy, fully exposed to an invisible enemy. He knew that wasting officers is pretty, but it is not war.

"I shall order you to the rear, under arrest, unless you get back there with the men immediately!"

Mackworth retired, with a look at his superior officer for which he should have been court-martialled. After that, the work of the Police became a chase after the intangible, up mountain slopes, when you pulled your horse after you; down them, when he slid atop of you.

Chatta's band was at the north, to the south, to the east and west; but when the troops got to the spot, after forced marching, all signs of them had disappeared.

It went on for two months, and all the while Mackworth's despondency grew. The weight of years was upon his yet barely squared shoulders, the troubles of a lifetime were written upon his face. And it was a pitiably young face, despit the growth of yellow beard. He would not be comforted. He was silent and morose. He would not lift up his beautiful baritone in song, be the camp ever so dull. Only his captain knew why, of course — and he didn't tell. Neither did he attempt consolation. He thought the remorse healthful, and he knew, besides, that in such cases a man has to work out his own conclusions and salvation. This is the way Mackworth eventually tried to work out his:

There came one day a runner from the hostiles—a dish-faced, straight-locked creature of sinews—who spoke through the White Mountain interpreter of the Police, and said that his chief was ready to go back to the reservation, but that he must go upon his own terms. And the chief stipulated, moreover, that one white man—one, alone and unguarded—should go to the hostile camp and discuss those terms. If a force attempted to come, he would retreat with his braves and the trouble would continue.

Morley made answer that none of his men had any intention whatever of walking into a death trap of the sort.

Then Mackworth spoke up. "I have," he said.

"Get out," said the captain incredulously.

"I mean what I say," said Mackworth, "and I shall consider your permission to go the greatest and the only favour you can do me. Something may be effected by it."

"Your death, that's all; and a little preliminary torture."

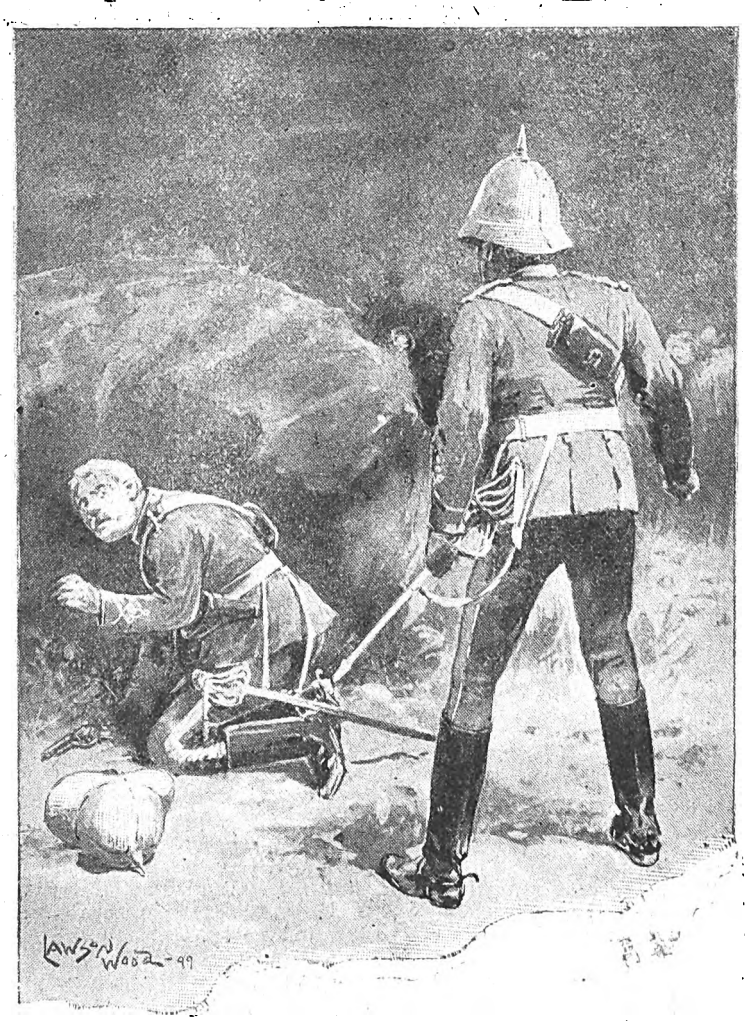
The lieutenant shrugged his shoulders. "Shall you let me go?" he insisted.

"Not by a long sight."

"I wish to go, Captain Morley."

Morley considered, and he decided that it might not be wise to refuse. There was no knowing just what the set-faced boy might do. So they parleyed together for a time, then Mackworth mounted his horse and went. He did not expect to come back, and the officers and men did not expect to see him again. They watched him go off into the distance of the plain, toward the mountains, following his guide, who swung on at the long, untiring dog trot.

After four hours they came to the mouth of a narrow canyon. The runner had given no sign or sound, and the fixed look had not gone from



He hid behind a boulder, crouched and cowered there, trembling so that his revolver fell from his hands.

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Mackworth's face. Well within the canyon the hostiles were in camp. They had hobbled their lean little ponies, the squaws were gathering wood, and the bucks were squatting upon the ground or playing monte with cards of painted hide around a cowskin spread under a cedar tree. Four of them rose and slouched forward. There was a prolonged scrutiny upon both sides.

The chief waited for Mackworth to begin; but the white man's instincts were good. He beat the sullenly silent redskin at his own game, and in the end the chief spoke. The guide displayed for the first time his understanding, and interpreted. Mackworth made answer with decision, stating his own terms. The bucks scowled, and the chief began to argue.

The white man, with the unflinching eyes, would not compromise. "Tell him," Mackworth said, "that this is my will. If he will not do this I go back to the soldiers, and we follow you and kill you all, man and woman." The face of the chief grew black, a growl rose from the crowding bucks, and the watching squaws began to chatter in voices sweet as the tinkle of glass bells.

The chief stepped suddenly forward and caught the bridle above the curb. Not so much as an eyelash of the stern, white young face quivered, and the heart of the red man was filled with admiration. One movement of fear would have cost Mackworth his life then; but he was not afraid, not though he know that torture might await him. He sat looking coolly down at the lowering, cruel faces. The chief turned and spoke to the bucks, and there was a growl of protest; the squaws joined with a shrill little chorus scream. But the chief flung away the bridle with a force which made the horse back.

"He do same you say. He go back to homes to-day. He say you ukishee quick," said the interpreter. Mackworth turned deliberately and "ukisheed" with no show of haste and without a backward look.

He reported his success and went to his tent. His look of stolid wretchedness was unchanged. Morley began to be nervous. He went to the tent himself and found the lieutenant writing a letter by lantern light. It was not a normal opportunity to take for that, so the captain, being filled with misgivings, trumped up an errand and sent him off on it.

He placed the barrel well in his mouth and pulled the trigger.

Then he looked at the letter. It was to Mackworth's mother. Morley did not read it, but he guessed the whole thing in a flash. He took up Mackworth's carbine and slid it under the tent flags into the outer darkness. Also he broke the Colt's, which had been thrown down upon the bedding, and put the cartridges in his pocket. Then he replaced it in the holster, and going out picked up the carbine and hid it in the brush.

After the camp was all asleep and Morley snoring loudly across the tent, Mackworth groped under his pillow and brought out the revolver. He cocked it and waited a moment; then he placed the barrel well in his mouth and pulled the trigger once—and then again and again.

* * *

At first call for reveille Morley awoke. Mackworth was already up, and turning he studied his captain's face with the faintest and most unwilling of smiles twitching the corners of his mouth. It was the most natural look his face had worn in weeks.

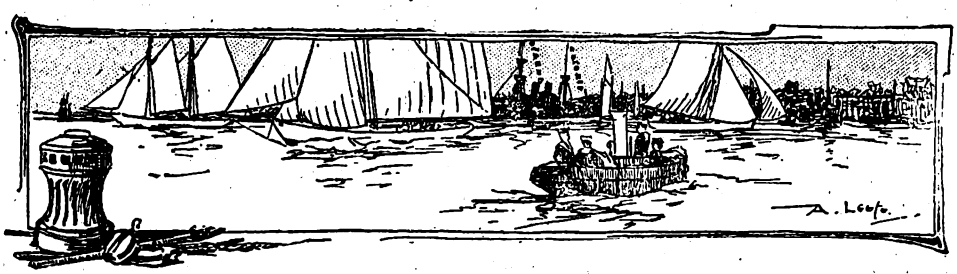
"Well?" said Morley.

"Well," answered Mackworth, "I should like my carbine and the cartridges of my revolver, please."

Morley's face broke into a broad grin. "Will you be good if I let you have them?" he asked.

"I'll be good," promised the lieutenant.

F. C. STUTT.



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AN AUSTRALIAN STORY.

"GIRLS," said Lance, "you had better fly round like two-year olds. I've asked Lieutenant Feveral to tea."

"To tea," screamed Leonie, tossing back her mane of red-brown hair. "There isn't a clean dinner-napkin in the house. You know to-morrow is washing day."

"Well, it is Barbara's fault, not mine. The fellow met her in Sydney, and must be dead nuts on her, for he played billiards with me at Cray's to-day, and just let me win. Then he fished so that I had to ask him to the Priory. Where is Barbara?"

"Out; giving a music-lesson in the town. What on earth is the man doing in Waveny?"

"He has been staying at Werrimu with the Hills, on a short holiday to see bush life, and reckoned his nearest way home was by Waveny—as if Hendra wasn't quite fifty miles nearer. He must take the train to-morrow, so can't drop in to any more meals. Just 'buck in,' like a good girl, and give us something decent."

"Barbara says they cook so beautifully on the gunboat," said Leonie. "He will expect everything so nice."

"Oh, here is Gracie," as the elder Miss Wycherley strolled in from the garden, carrying a dilapidated basket full of pink and yellow roses. Her face fell when Lance repeated his news.

"There's absolutely nothing for tea," she said. "The twins finished the stewed peaches when they came back from school, and we have only six decent small knives. Of course the small fry can dine in the kitchen, and mother is spending the day at the Cedars. Lance, Tom, Leonie, Barbara, self, and the man. Yes, the six knives will just do. What a dreadful nuisance Barbara's admirers are becoming."

"But none so bad as this one," sighed Leonie, who, though still in her early "teens," seemed the most responsible person in the happy-go-lucky family.

"I don't mind the ones from the stations, but a sailor and a town man is different. The tablecloth was clean yesterday, but Tom spilt cocoa all over it."

"No, only down the centre, luckily. Run up and fetch me your yellow sash, Leonie. I will drape it with these roses, and put the pink shade over the lamp—the glass is cracked. Be quick, like a good child."

"I really don't see why," began Leonie rebelliously. "Sailors are always clumsy, and what am I to do for a sash when I wear my white frock on Sunday, if he spills his tea, or anything?"

"Rubbish. He is sure to be careful. Run quickly, it is nearly six now. Go to the gate, Lance, and wait for him, and take him to see the grape vines; there is so little for tea, and he might be tempted to eat some grapes."

Lance strolled away down the grass-grown drive, and Leonie returned with the sash, which Grace draped artistically. In old days, when the Wycherleys, of Reedy Creek, where a power in the land, Gracie had always arranged the table centres. She thought of those palmy days, and sighed a little as she put on the silver knife-rests and the spoons, where the Wycherley lion was still rampant.

It was all the plate they had left from the wreck and did not match very well with the common-looking knives and stone china. Still when the tall lamp threw a rosy glow through its pink shade on the soft yellow silk, and the shell-tinted La France roses nestling lovingly against their amber cloth of gold sisters, Gracie decided that "even Barbara would be satisfied."

Leonie was the only really tidy one in an untidy family, and so was foredoomed to the usual fate. If scissors were wanted, "Oh, look in Leonie's basket." A clean handkerchief. "In Leonie's left-hand drawer," and so on. But Leonie continued to keep thimble, scissors, etc. in her work-basket, and ironed up her stock of handkerchiefs every Monday morning, after gathering them from the uttermost parts of the earth, viz., from garden seats or skirt pockets, or (favourite haunt of all) the flat-iron shelf in the laundry, resting in oblivion after doing duty as ironholders!

"Where are the bellows?" cried Grace. "Tom, do put down that book, and look for them. You horrid boy, to use all the small wood making bullets—the kettle will never boil."

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Leonie looked hopelessly round. "The bellows are always lost," she said. "So are the hot-water jugs, and the toasting-fork. As long as I live, I shall believe that kitchen things have souls, and minds, and characters. Look at the kerosene holder; put it where you like, it always gets into passages, and loves being knocked over. As for the toasting fork, it positively hides."

Her remarks woke dreaming Tom to reflection. "Awfully true what you say, 'spring chicken,'" he said. "Now, there's the little boiler, it has a down on everyone. The spiteful way it sticks out from under the table, and barks one's shins, proves that. As for the teapot, clean it out as often as you like, when you want it, it is always full of tea-leaves. They are a lot of bad characters, anyway."

"Oh! no, not at all." said Leonie. "Just look at the hearth-brush; we use it for everything—cleaning out ashes, dusting furniture, hunting cobwebs, and yet it is always just handy when it is wanted."

"For goodness' sake, stop chattering," said Grace; her fair face crimson from stooping over the refractory fire. "The man is in the garden now, and Lance is talking to him. Remember, Tom, you are not to take butter at tea. I gave quite half a cupful to a tramp this morning, and Barbara is sure to forget to bring in more."

"More fool you," said Tom. "Here are the bellows, sneaking into the flour-bin. I'll give the fire a blow for you."

Leonie flew hither and thither, "tracking the tea-cups," and returned triumphantly at last to wash them up. One contained a tadpole, belonging to the twins; another—unearthed from Lance's room—was half-full of shaving soap; and a third held a dark and deadly mixture of rose leaves and salt, owned by the twins, and called "Attar of roses." but Leonie impartially emptied all treasures into the waste-bucket.

"Such a house I never did see," cried Grace. "Oh! bother, there, that horrid little boiler has gone and rubbed itself all over my clean frock; hateful thing."

"You should wear an apron," sighed Leonie. "I've always told you so."

"An apron. As if I ever had a moment's time to put an apron on."

"You are too big, and this kitchen is too small," said Tom. "No fellow would marry you, Gracie, unless he was a millionaire. Six-foot girls are luxuries, and men nowadays can't afford luxuries. Give me a neat little nugget for genuine hard work!"

Grace, whose stature and build were those of a tall Greek goddess, took no notice of this brotherly remark, but ran over to a silver-backed hand-glass that hung behind the kitchen door, and patted her smooth flaxen hair with her shapely, white hands.

"I think I'll do," she said. "Lance will be cross if he is left too long. Help the 'spring chicken,' all you can, Tom, and be sure not to let the twins get at the buttered toast. Oh! and you might fish Browning out of the bread-crock; it fell in this morning when I was shelling peas. It's Barbara's blue and gold copy, so you had better put it back in her room for me;" with which parting injunction Miss Wycherley left the kitchen and went out into the garden to talk to her sister's friend.

"I suppose he has come to ask Barbara to marry him," said Tom. "Gracie ought to marry first, being the eldest. She's more reliable, too. One never knows what bee is humming in Bab's bonnet."

"You mean that Barbara might say 'No,'" said Leonie. "I don't think so. If she likes him at all, she will take him. You see Barbara hates poverty and muddle and trouble. It would be such a good thing. We must keep the twins away this evening and give him a chance to propose."

"You've got a good head on you," said Tom, admiringly, "though you are no beauty," gazing critically at his sister's many angles and sharp, anxious little face.

"Neither are you, for the matter of that," said the owner of the "good head," busily buttering toast. "We are the plain ones in a good-looking family, though you will grow a moustache, some day that will cover your awful mouth."

Tom glanced at the looking-glass. "It's a generous mouth, anyway," he said. "None of your mean little button-holes. I'm your man if you want the stupid, handsome ones kept out of the way. You must fix Grace up. She is just the sort to think she is entertaining when she is playing third. I can manage the twins."

And so the two arch-plotters combined to take the threads of two lives from the hands of Fate into their own.

Ralph Feveral was a clean-shaven, sturdy, blue-eyed sailor. He had met Barbara when she was on a visit to relatives in Sydney when his ship was stationed there. He was navigating lieutenant on *H. M. S. Blackadder*, but, unlike the usual run of naval officers, was exceptionally well endowed with the good things of this world, being a younger son with a fortune of his own and a love of the sea for its own sake, which alone kept him chained to the service.

He might have married more than one of the many girls who fluttered, butterfly-like, through Sydney society, but Barbara's strange individuality had left a lasting impression, and Ralph had obtained leave and accepted the Hill's invite, chiefly because Werrimu Station was in the Waveny district, for he had heard of the downfall of Reedy Creek, and that the family with their fallen fortunes, had settled in the mountain town.

The old house, in its romantic garden, seemed a fit setting for Barbara's unusual and half-mysterious beauty. The luxuriant creepers and climbing roses hid the ant-eaten, unpainted walls, just as the good looks and unfailing good spirits of its inmates created a glamour that hid the fact of the sordidness and discomfort of their poverty from all but themselves. And the lieutenant thought he had never seen a happier household, and he certainly enjoyed his tea, in spite of the fact that there were moths in the honey and that Leonie's hastily made scones were like so many bullets!

While he was washing his hands in Lance's bedroom a small boy with a shock of thick but white hair had entered with a clean towel. He lingered gazing at Feveral intently, and then had innocently asked his name.

"Mine is Tom Wycherley," he said. "What is your name?"

"Feveral—Ralph Feveral," said the sailor. Whereupon Tom had given a most dramatic start.

"Then it is your photo that Bab keeps in her room? I often wondered whose it was. My sister Barbara is not like other girls, you know—does not care about photos, at all—lets 'em lie about anywhere. So it's yours, is it?"

With which statement Master Tom had made a rapid exit, leaving Feveral to the pleasing fancy that his photo

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alone, was favoured by a place in Barbara's bedroom, and the thought created a chain of others.

As a matter of fact, it was there with half a score of photos, tucked away in a forgotten drawer and hidden by faded ribbons and crushed flowers, old programmes, and other mementoes of her Sydney days.

One of her cousins had slipped it into her box when she was going, "for a joke," she said because Barbara had not any particular delight in Feveral's attentions; but of course the lieutenant could not know this, therefore Tom's timely information decided a half-formed plan in his mind. He had not meant to propose to the girl this time, fearing to hurry matters, for it had not seemed to him that she returned his affection at all. He knew that she was going to Sydney again shortly, and that the *Blackadder* would still be in Port Jackson —time enough then—but if, after all, she did care for him, there was no time like the present, and he would try his fate to-night.

And when Barbara came in from her quick walk through the sharp mountain air, with the dusky hair ruffled by the night wind, and her olive cheeks aglow with the exercise, and seemed graciously pleased to see an old friend, the lieutenant made up his mind to act at once.

"Surely," he thought, "I will be able to get her alone for a moment or two in this vast old garden."

However, after tea the whole family, including several little girls and boys of various heights and ages, seemed inclined to congregate round Ralph on the veranda. Grace and Barbara decided not to wash up until the morning, and Lance was quite content to stay at home and listen to this traveller from strange countries, talking.

The rule in the Wycherley family was, "share and share alike," and Feveral was suffering the penalty of being amusing. Brian and Betty, the twins, who were of an uncomfortably demonstrative nature, clung especially close to him, and separated him entirely from the canvas chair in which Barbara was resting.

At last Lance dragged himself unwillingly away to go to The Cedars to bring his mother home, and then Tom whispered a mysterious message to the twins, which caused them to rush off kitchenwards like mad things, for the twins were always hungry, and Tom had promised to let them make toffee, reckless of the wrath to come in the morning when the only enamelled saucepan would be found full of burnt sugar.

Leonie hunted the other children to bed, and Feveral was left with the two girls, and Gracie seemed very happy, indeed, like the serene young goddess she was, swinging in the string hammock, and asking Ralph many questions, and she felt slightly annoyed when Leonie insisted upon her presence in the children's nursery to inspect an "awful rash," which had appeared on the baby's arm, and it was some time before she discovered that red ink had more to do with the disfigurement than anything else.

She went back to the veranda to enjoy some more of the lieutenant's conversation, and found that the birds had flown. In fact, Ralph had seized the opportunity, and taken Barbara off to show him how the lower garden looked by moonlight.

In after days Barbara never could remember all the words of her first proposal—only one sentence, "and as I love you so I cannot live without you. Will you marry me, Barbara?" And looking into the brave blue eyes, she knew that in very truth he did love her, and yet she said, "No, no, I cannot."

"Why, Barbara; why? Is it that you love someone else?"

"No, indeed; it is not that. I have never cared for anyone. I don't believe I can. I like you very much, indeed—better than anyone I know—but I do not love you."

"But the love will come in time," said the man, using the same false platitude, and believing it, as other men have done before him. "I won't hurry you in any way, sweetheart. You shall have as long as you like to get used to me, but if you do not care for anyone else I am not afraid that you will not love me; such love as mine must bring an answering affection."

"I would like to marry you," said the girl calmly. "You could give me the life I like—you could take me from all this misery and poverty, but is it fair to you—as far as I know myself I am not capable of caring for anyone more than I do for you (I always liked you in those Sydney days better than the other men I met), but is it possible that I do not know myself. I wish—oh, I wish you had waited before you asked this."

"But you are not going to refuse me, Barbara. I will not press you for an answer. I love you with my whole heart and soul, and I am willing to take the risk you speak of. It is only because this is all so unexpected that you feel like that. Say 'yes' my dear one."

His strong arms were around her, his strong will seemed to dominate hers, and there is no doubt that her inclinations were all in his favour, and so Barbara said:

"Yes!"

She liked and admired the man immensely, and she thoroughly believed that she was incapable of any stronger feeling for anyone. She had had many admirers, and had been brought up, as most bush girls are, in the society of men, and at the age of twenty she considered that it was impossible to love in the future, because she had not done so in the past.

Perhaps her nature was, after all, a cold one, and the latent fire in her blue-black Irish eyes meant nothing, and many happy marriages have been based on love and esteem, instead of love and love. These pages have only to do with tea at the Priory, and the consequences thereof; and the subsequent history of Ralph and Barbara are quite another story.

* * * * *

Tom crept to Leonie's window some hours later, and invited her to come out on the roof, which she immediately did, meeting him on the sloping shingles between the dormer windows.

"It's all right," whispered the boy. "He is coming to see mother in the morning, and I'm going to ask him to beg us off about the burnt saucepan."

"Of course it's all right," said Leonie. "Barbara's cheeks are red as can be, and she is in Grace's room, laughing and crying at the same time; girls always do that when they are engaged. Still" (with one of her anxious sighs), "I wish it was Gracie we had helped instead of Bab; none of us really know her."

"How could we," said the youth contemptuously, "when she does not know herself. Anyway, he is deep enough in love for anything."

"Poor man," said the gentle Leonie pityingly. "I should think he was. He took a scone every time you passed the dish, and never noticed that no one else did."

"Oh, that will be all right," said Tom hopefully. "When a fellow has got an attack of love as bad as that chap has even a ton of your scones couldn't hurt him."

Ethel Mills.

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THE BITE of the PICHU-GUATE.

CLEARLY Claudio was tired, and it took a good deal to tire this big, rough-headed young Mexican. But it was not to be wondered at after his morning's work. The lambs in his barn were now five days old, and at that age a New Mexican lamb is smart enough in body and impish enough in mind to upset the most patient-minded man.

Then the mothers, whose age might have been expected to give them discretion, were as crazy as the lambs. To add to the worry, the snakes were beginning to come out of their winter nap.

The opening of May at the 8,000 feet altitude of San Miguel is rather early for these long sleepers; but the spring was unusually warm, and though none had been seen, yet there was no doubting their presence. The hungry sheep were wild for the tender blades of grass that began to show about the mouths of the prairie dog's burrows, and nowhere else.

But in some burrows were other tenants than prairie dogs lying in the sunny mouths of the holes, and savagely resentful of interruption. Already that day Claudio had found three dead ewes, lying close beside a burrow, fearfully swollen, and upon the nose of each were two tiny black marks such as might be made with a tattooing needle.

Late in the afternoon the ewes, with a chorus of strange whistles, went tearing and galloping over the hillside and disappeared over the brow of the ridge, as if the very wolves were after them.

Claudio started in pursuit, but the lambs hung at his heels, in spite of a bombardment of words and pebbles that he directed at them, and whenever he paused they pranced up to him and snuggled against his legs, and dropped contentedly at his very feet.

Pulling off his coat, Claudio swung it vigorously about him to clear a space, leaped over the backs of a few loiterers, and went running up the slope at a pace it was a wonder to see.

The coat dropped from his hand as he jumped a gully, and as the lambs came stumbling along several tripped on it, and finding it warm promptly sprawled upon their knees and began to nurse at whatever rag or tag they first found. And the others, fancying that they were being robbed of their dinner, crowded and jostled about, butting, falling down, and clambering over one another.

Claudio might have laughed at the sight; but when he came back, fifteen minutes later, he saw about the coat only a lot of little white patches, smeared with blood. Here and there a lamb was to be seen, wandering disconsolately about or fallen exhausted over a shrub. And over the further hillside was just disappearing a big dark shambling figure with two white objects shining on it.

It was all plain enough. The ewes, scenting the bear from afar as he sneaked through the woods, had fled incontinently; for the actual presence of no other wild beast so terrifies sheep as the mere smell of a bear. And taking advantage of Claudio's brief absence, Bruin had sallied from the junipers, played havoc among the lambs (which were too stupid to fear even him), and was now making off with a couple "for future reference."

The bear, like bears always, was only anxious to get away if he decently could, and ran his best. Ordinarily that would have been far better than Claudio's best—or a very fair horse's best, for that matter. But greediness is costly, even for bears. The lamb in his mouth was no handicap whatever; and having eaten two or three besides, he might have been contented with that.

But the one he persisted in carrying hugged under his forearm did seriously impede him. Even then, in the long run, he was more than a match for his pursuer. When Claudio came in full view of him and only a hundred yards behind, he whipped from his belt the revolver he carried in lieu of a rifle.

"Throwing down" in the swift, instinctive motion of those who really know how to use a revolver, and never stop to ask whether it has sights or not, he sent a leaden proxy running for him. It was a good shot, tired and out of breath as he was, the kind of shooting one has to learn on the frontier, and cannot learn in a gallery.

The bear turned a complete somersault, and, gathering itself again, began biting viciously at its rump.

Claudio had not stopped at all; but now, when he was within thirty yards, he halted and watched the brute so as to give him a shot at a vital part. But at that very instant the bear, with a snuffle of rage, wheeled and came galloping at his late pursuer.

Claudio sent a square shot at the skull—not by any means under the impression that he could bore that sloping forehead, but hoping the rap might startle the beast into rising, so that he could get a chance at the

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throat, the best of all shots at a bear. But the heavy ball merely ploughed a red furrow up the skull, and the bear came lurching on. It was worse than useless to run. Slender as was the chance of life now, it all lay in standing firm as Claudio well knew.

When it was within six feet, the huge brute reared upon his haunches, and, springing back a step, Claudio was bringing back his weapon like lightning to "let go" when it should be on a level with that mighty throat, now fully exposed. But the bear was no innocent, and, cleverly judged as was Claudio's move, he had met his match in quick wit. Even the sweep of his swift arm was slow beside the flash of that great paw, as it swooped far forward, met his descending hand with a calculation an Indian eye might have envied, and sent the heavy revolver spinning forty feet, going off as it flew. And in another instant the shepherd was on his back, and the bear upon him.

The great claws had struck only the revolver, and Claudio's hand was unhurt, save where the violent wrenching of the trigger had cut and twisted his fingers; and instinctively he gripped deep in the thick fur where his hands first lighted. Neither had he been hurt by the fall, for here was soft grey sand—which a little relieved, too, the fearful pressure upon his legs. But none of these things comforted Claudio; and he fought only as a man fights blindly to the end. His last faint hope had gone when the revolver went whirling far beyond his reach.

The bear, which had gone to bed in his cave in the canyon of Acebache, rolling fat, in November, had but a few days ago come forth from that long nap, the shadow of his proper self. His long heavy fur was sadly rusty, and his huge frame lean as a rail. He had been interrupted in the first square meal he had enjoyed in five months, and from that long fast came two strange results.

One was, that he was not half himself in strength, and that the powerful young Mexican was, therefore, something more than a puppet in his paws.

Of the end, certainly, there could be no doubt; but meantime Claudio wrestled mightily, and even succeeded in struggling to his feet hugging close, to give those paws no chance for one of the swipes that would make an egg-shell of his head. His face he snuggled into the bear's chest, and so kept clear of the dripping jaws. And despite the fearful pressure under which his ribs creaked and swung, he hunched and tugged and swayed blindly and desperately, as if he were wrestling with some tall man whom he might hope to pitch at last. But it was not for long.

Finding these close quarters unsatisfactory, the bear brought up its muscular arm, and clapping its paw upon Claudio's mat of hair, forced his head resistlessly back. The great claws were buried in his scalp, and little streams of red spurted out. The bear's left arm was round his waist, while the right was giving him the "break hold" as scientifically as any wrestler could have done.

And now a villainous, warm breath came sickening in his face, and he could see the red jaws and white teeth within six inches. He even noticed, with that strange inconsequence which come upon one in these moments, that blood from the scalp wound had run down and tinged the froth which dripped from that great mouth.

In a frenzy of terror he made a clutch under the throat, to hold back that terrible head, and the strongest man could scarce have bent against Claudio's desperate arms; but the big jaws, working grimly, drew nearer. A deadly faintness began to spread over him, and Claudio shut his eyes.

Just then a sudden jerk ran through the body of the bear. and there was a sharp snort as of rage or pain. Claudio opened his eyes. He could see nothing but the demoniac face, but in it he fancied there was a new expression.

Then there was a sickening movement of the great claws which had sunk deep into his back and scalp. Surely they were relaxing!

Their withdrawal was far more painful than their entrance had been; but even with the faintness of the new pain, a sudden wave of joy swept through the shepherd—for the first time, now, he hoped, though he knew not why.

He shook his head savagely to clear the blood which streamed down over his eyes (the paw had dropped from his scalp), and dug his fists into the deep furred throat, and fought with the strength of two Claudios—fighting no longer like a dying rat fights, but like a man for hope of life.

Then a very wonderful thing befel. The bear was groaning and panting heavily; and suddenly it lurched and fell to the ground, carrying Claudio with it. But it was no longer trying to get his head between its jaws. For a moment it lay upon him, writhing and grinding its teeth, and then flung itself to one side biting up a great mouthful of sand.

Claudio leaped to his feet, ran to his revolver, and fell upon it, crying like a child. It was ten minutes before he could get up, for loss of blood—and, more than all, the frightful strain—had left him limp as a rag. At last he staggered to his feet, clutching the weapon, and walked unsteadily towards the bear.

Laying down his revolver he caught the heavy fur of

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the rump, to turn the bear over. Ordinarily he would have succeeded. Four hundredweight is no small lump, but Claudio, as you have seen, was an uncommonly powerful young man. Now, however, worn out with his fearful struggle, and with nerves so unstrung that he trembled all over, it was too much for him.

Still the mystery would not let him rest; and hunching his shoulder against the bear's back, he ran his hand under, feeling for the wound. He groped and groped, but suddenly in a hollow felt the touch of something very different from fur or sand, and in the same instant an inconceivable pang. And when he jerked his arm away a tiny snake less than a foot long, grey-backed and coppery on the stomach, was hanging from his thumb.

The last vestige of colour faded from the brown face and left it as grey as ashes between the drying streaks of blood—for Claudio knew the pichu-guate, the only real asp in the New World, the deadliest snake in North America.

So he had escaped the bear only to die by this tiny foe—for never yet had one been known to recover from the bite of the pichu-guate. A rattlesnake was nothing; but this, well, see what it had done for such a monster as the bear, and in the space of less than a minute!

Evidently, in their struggle, Bruin had stepped too close to this unsuspecting danger—that great lump on his hind leg explained all. Had he carried his usual coat of fat, the venom would have taken far longer to operate, and he would have had abundant time to settle accounts with Claudio. But he no longer looked gaunt He was still swelling—already he looked plump and fat, as if July with all its glory were here.

Claudio was reeling. Fearful pains shot up his arm and went forking through his body. Upon the thumb were only two black dots, right at the tip, but the hand in these five seconds had become double its size. If he could only cut it off! But alas! his knife was in his coat—and before he could get half-way to that he would be a dead shepherd.

All this had taken not so long as it has for you to read it—nay, scarce the time in which one might spell the longest word in it; for in these crises things and thoughts move swiftly, and one lives fast.

Claudio was still squeezing his thumb and crying aloud for a knife, when his eye lit on the revolver. Quick as a flash he sprang and caught it up and cocked it. There was just one cartridge left!

His nerves were steady now. He held his hand arm's-length before him, the wounded thumb erect, drew the revolver right back up to his eye, that the ball might not mangle too much, and thus stop the blood, which must flow; and with a hand as firm as if it had been carved of stone, pulled the trigger.

There was a dull, numb sensation, hardly a pain in all that side, and when the smoke cleared from his eyes, his right hand was black and bleeding. The thumb was gone clean at the lower joint.

There is one man in New Mexico who has been bitten by the pichu-guate and lives to tell of it—a tall, powerful, good-natured shepherd, with four grim grey furrows in his hair, and the thumb of the right hand missing. But Claudio seems rather proud of these disfigurements, and often says:

"Who talks of bargains? For so cheaply I bought my life twice in one hour."

A. BALDWIN.

THE WAR HORSE.

WHEN M. de Bossué returned to the court in France hewas most coldly received. The king refused to see him and the king's courtiers were quite uncivil. At his sweetheart's house, in the Rue des Saints Pères, the door was closed in his face. He was filled with astonishment and grief, both of which were increased when he went to see his friends. All looked askance at him, few deigned even to speak to him, and none accorded him the explanation he sought.

Too proud to question strangers, and yet sensitive enough to suffer keenly under the treatment he had received, he went to his room to brood alone.

There was a mirror here, and in this he surveyed himself. The hardships of war had deprived him of his good looks; his face was drawn and haggard, his skin wrinkled; his eyes were dull and sad; while across his left cheek a long, disfiguring scar told where a sabre had cut deep.

He left the mirror and sat down dejectedly. "I am grown ugly," he said, "and poor, and therefore they shun me." He thought of his life, offered to his country and to glory; of his hard campaigns in America and the Indies; of the famous battles in which he had done his part under Montcalm and Vaudreuil—"but all this," he told himself, "has been in vain. The king, my love, my friends, they are none of them left to me. The only faithful one of them all—my horse, who used to lick my hand and neigh gladly at my coming—he, too, is gone, for I have sold him. No one—nothing is left to me!"

One black thought was succeeded by another, and his gloom and melancholy increased till life seemed but a burden to be got rid of. He was a man of promptitude and decision, and, having come to this conclusion, he did not procrastinate. His pistol lay ready to his hand—one shot and the deed was done.

At court they said, "M. de Bossué had the fever." Weeks and months passed, and they spoke of him no more.

But there remained to Bossué an old-time friend. After serving in Spain for some ten years, and growing discontented with his work, M. le Comte de la Puysaye returned to France and to the court. He gained prestige at Mesdames de Boufless's, de Chauvelin's, de Surgere's, and Luxembourg; asked new service of the king, and solicited a regiment. He called himself a friend of Bossué's. "Poor fellow!" he said, "only thirty years old. What could have made him leave us in that way?"

His face clouded when he heard the story, for he was a brave man himself. "A coward!" he cried; "impossible!"

"But yes!" said his informer; "we repeat only what the reports said—reports which were sent to the king direct. M. de Bossué, it seems, disliked the enemy too greatly—so much so, in fact, that he could never bring himself to approach him."

"Bossué a coward!" cried the count; "he must have changed greatly, then. May not those reports have been false?"

"Well, the marshal himself——" and so on. La

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Puysaye heard the story repeated a score of times, and found that the mention of Bossué's name brought forth only curses or reproaches. He ended by renouncing him.

"But," he said to himself one day, "I can't forget him. I loved him well, and I believe I love him still. Very well, I shall allow myself this little eccentricity—that of loving a dishonoured wretch. Bossué remains my friend, and of all the world I alone shall recall him with something other than disdain."

He hung the dead man's portrait on his wall once more. But the portrait was an old one, and no longer resembled anybody. La Puysaye, discontented, wished for some other souvenir—something which Bossué had used. He thought of the horse: "Where is he now? They tell me that he sold him. That horse carried poor Bossué for ten years. I must find him."

Once, while his friend still served with him, he had seen the horse—a curious beast, of a dark-yellowish colour, the product of a cross between a Spanish barb and an Indian pony. He was able to furnish descriptions of the animal to certain men whom he sent in search of it.

The men were away three months.

One day, La Puysaye received notice that a horse answering to the description given had been found in a field in Artois.

He went to the place and bought the animal at once.

It was indeed, Bossué's extraordinary beast, the friend of his friend, old and thin, worn by the hard service before the plough and the ill-treatment of the farm-hands. There were the white legs, still fine as those of a racer, the long, black tail and mane, and those eyes, dark, cold, clear, and fixed, that made one uneasy. "Strange animal!" thought La Puysaye.

He had it fed, groomed, and saddled, and set out for Paris at a rather halting gallop. Much fatigued he arrived at length. But tired as he was, there was to be little rest for him. A note from the Bureau of War awaited him, informing him that his request for a regiment had been granted; that it was to be known as the "Grenadiers Puysaye;" and that he must join it near Fribourg as soon as possible. Taking hardly time for the writing of a letter and the saying of an adieu, he departed for that place; and, gratifying his own wish, he went there on Bossué's horse.

His new grenadiers grumbled among themselves. "Is it with that plug," they said, "that he means to lead us?"

La Puysaye's friends looked at the beast critically. An ensign lifted its lip. "No use," said the count, "he's an old horse, and his teeth no longer mark his age."

"But why didn't you come on your black fellow?"

"Oh, Constantine broke his leg, and—but do not laugh, messieurs; poor and old as is this charger, he is good enough for the campaign. I judged that we should be only amusing ourselves here, and I did not wish to honour the enemy by riding too fine a horse."

The officers saluted smilingly, and the colonel, wishing to see the marshal, M. de Coigny, inquired the way to his quarters. Before going thither, he left his horse with his orderly, who was going towards the trenches.

"Bring him back to me to-night," said the count, and the man departed with the horse.

But not more than an hour had passed, and La Puysaye was just leaving the marshal's quarters, when an attack was ordered on a strong point where eighteen hundred men had been killed the night before. The trumpets sounded and the army hastened to respond. All other tasks were abandoned, and, with others, their uniforms into order, their arms in readiness, the grenadiers fell into line.

Being ordered to hold his regiment in reserve, M. de la Puysaye conducted it behind a certain embankment, then sought to go after his horse. But his friends stopped him.

"Not now," they said; "the place is exposed; you would be risking your life needlessly."

La Puysaye returned to his place, and gave vent to his vexation. "Miserable orderly!" he cried—"my horse! See what he has done with my horse!"

"*Ciel!*" exclaimed a captain in astonishment, "why are you so concerned about the beast? From whom did you get him?"

La Puysaye, tired of keeping his secret, revealed it. "From De Bossué. He was, alas, one of my old friends."

The news was murmured through the ranks, while the officers marvelled audibly. "What an idea!" they said. "Where is he, that we may observe him again?"

"In that trench over there, which is so exposed. My orderly must have been drunk to leave him in such a place."

"Oh," cried an officer, "have no fear." Bossué's horse! The horse of a coward! He'll crouch when the bullets fly; you'll find him again safe and sound."

"After all," said another, "the trench covers him; he's satisfied to stay in it; he won't come out."

At that moment a bomb came singing through the air, and from the trench, calmly, proudly, defiantly, a horse emerged. He stood alone in the middle of the field, in a great open place—alone. The saddle was on his back, the bit in his mouth; and though he had lowered his neck in the silence following the first bomb, he seemed waiting only for a signal on his bridle.

"The coward's horse!" thought the army.

Just then the place seemed to fill with smoke, while the city beyond trembled as with an earthquake shock; three more bombs in the ranks of France, and fifteen files were cut down like so much grain.

The trumpets sounded the attack; and at that moment, suddenly, magnificently, the last rays of the setting sun clothed the horse in gold. He raised his head, as the brave steed does when the battle is on and the rider encourages him to advance; then, boldly, eagerly, joyously, he charged on the city at a gallop. Deaf to the thunder of the cannon, indifferent to the shot that whistled about him, glad to sniff again the smoke of powder, to feel once more the excitement of the combat, the gallant horse dashed on and on—a sublime spectacle for a whole army to witness.

What moved him to rush on the enemy so madly, to affront death so grandly? Was it the memory of Bossué's glorious battles? Was it the force of a habit acquired after a score of engagements—the result of a lesson learned on many fields?

They who followed swiftly after him did not know; but they swore afterwards that they had seen a hand on his bridle, feet pressing his sides, a shadowy form on his back, and for one brief instant a face, with a long scar on its left cheek and a look such as no coward ever wore.

The poor beast at length fell, bleeding from a score of wounds, but he had done enough; in the eyes of the army, he whose horse this had been was vindicated. Bossué was not a coward.

N. Christopher Burton.

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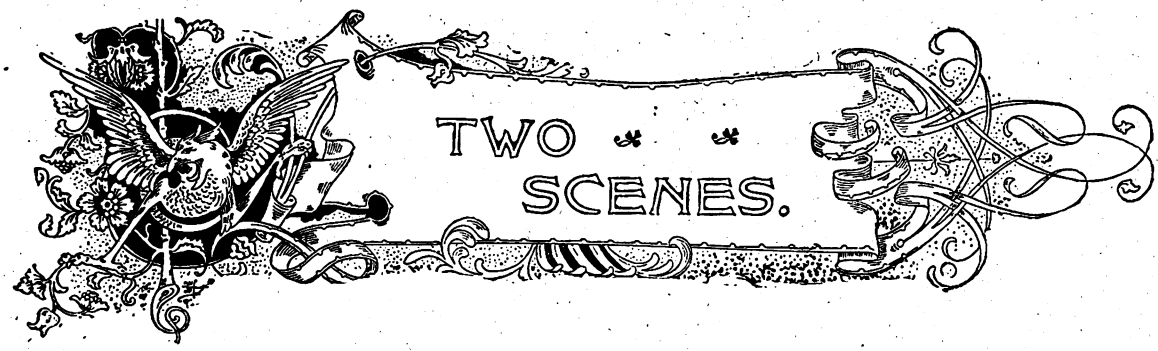

"I WONDER where you'll be this time next week. I think if I were a man I couldn't stop here. I suppose my saying that shows that one does not realise how awful war can be."

"Oh! I don't know. War must come sometimes. Do you really wish you were going out?"

"Yes, just to help look after you all, if anything—— But there, nothing will happen to you."

A little catch in her voice made the man look with still more interest into her pretty face.

Leaning over he said cheerily:

"Oh, well, a few may fall—probably some will—must, in fact——"

He hesitated.

As his face grew pale the thought seemed to force itself upon him more even than it had so often lately—the thought that he might never see the girl again.

He had felt somehow it would be better to postpone telling her till his return—but, he might never return. It would be better, then, that he had never spoken. Yet the desire was greater, grew overwhelming to tell her, and to feel sure that she loved him.

"Will you wait for me. I cannot go without telling you, dear. I love you. Say yes, and no bullet will find me, please Heaven."

No more words would come, as in feverish hope—or uncertainty—he awaited her answer.

Then he saw she no longer looked at him.

Following her eyes, he found another man gazing, with brows lifted satirically at him.

"My dance, Miss Serle! Excuse me, Nardon, won't you. I'm sorry to interrupt the piling on of the agony. Miss Serle is, I know, going to follow the doings of the Bromshires with the greatest interest."

As Nardon saw the girl he loved walk out of the conservatory with his superior officer and—he knew too well—rival, he seemed unable to say more, though he could have knocked the man down for his jeering.

Had the girl heard his declaration? Was there really any truth in the rumour that Major Flecter would after all win her?

No other dance with her. And to-morrow he would be getting well on his way down Channel. No chance of seeing her alone.

Ah! the music had ceased for good—the last dance was over. Everybody was going home.

As he came out of the conservatory, there she was on Flecter's arm evidently going down to her carriage. Flecter's look of cool possession exasperated him.

As she passed him, however, she turned to him.

"Good-bye, Captain Nardon, and the best of all luck." And as she shook hands with him she left her programme in his hand.

Mumbling out his good-bye, he watched the carriage roll off.

She was gone now.

Banishing thought he rushed home to complete his preparations for leaving.

And there he gazed on the programme at three scrawled words:

"Yes! Good-bye."

* * * * *

The Bromshire Regiment was distinguishing itself, but they were in a well nigh hopeless case.

By some awful mishap they had lost communication with the main body, and, only 800 strong, were keeping at bay 2000 Boers.

The Colonel, albeit with anxious face, was rushing hither and thither cheering his men on to withstand the attack long enough for support to be sent.

A galloper came up.

"The reserve ammunition has gone, sir. The mules got loose and could not be held."

The Colonel could not withold the words "My God!" as he heard the news.

Then summoning superhuman courage he shouted:

"Order the three left flank companies to retire two or three hundred yards and then gain the top of that hill to draw the Boer fire. The main body will retire at once."

One minute later, Major Flecter dashed up to the left of the battalion.

"Companies B, C, and D wheel about, and take possession of that kopje."

As he indicated the hill, his eyes lighted on Captain Nardon, waiting for the remaining order.

A look of malignant hatred swept over Flecter's face.

"As you were!" he thundered. "Companies C and D will carry out the first movement. Company B will descend into the valley to attract the enemy's attention."

The heat and hurry of the moment prevented Nardon attaching full meaning to Flecter's last order. His men were preparing to take up the new position. Everything depended on speed.

Nardon saw practically certain death for himself and his men in advancing to the spot most exposed to the raking shell fire of the Boers, but though he seemed to

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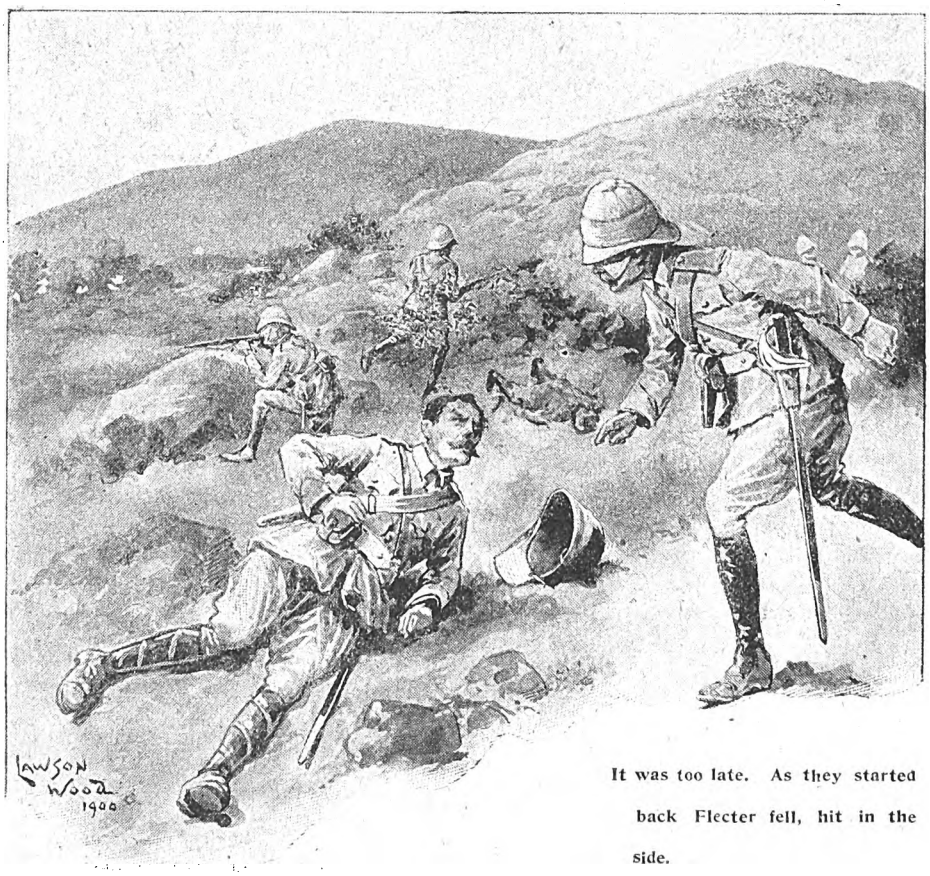
feel there was something wrong in the order, the movement seemed likely to effect a safe passing for the main body.

Flecter had retired to the centre. There, with gleaming face, in comparative cover, he had time to gloat over his work.

"Now he'll die. She was always fond of me before he came; curse him. She'll mourn him perhaps, but she'll marry me."

And as he watched the Boer fire suddenly directed at the gap in the valley, he felt all would soon be over with Company B and its captain.

It was then he suddenly blanched. How about himself. Would anybody survive?



It was too late. As they started back Flecter fell, hit in the side.

The order for retreat was given. They were to seize every bit of cover, and the direction was to be first along the left, into the back of the gap whose front Nardon and his men were guarding, and then behind the hill occupied by the other two companies.

In the front of the gap Nardon and his men, who were apparently not suffering much from the shell fire, were gallantly returning volley after volley.

Flecter, with the main body, rushed across the gap. As they crossed, the Colonel caught sight of Company B.

"Good Heavens," he shouted, "they will be cut to bits. They must retire. We shall get behind the kopje, and once there we are comparatively safe."

Close touch with death was having its effect on Flecter, and his horrible sacrifice of Nardon was not pleasing him so much. There he could see, a couple of hundred yards in front, as he clambered down, Nardon coolly directing his men in a biting rifle attack on the opposite hills, ever and anon glancing back to see how far the main body were from safety.

Nardon felt it was touch and go, his men were falling by twos and threes; yet perhaps he could gain the few minutes necessary.

The Boers were advancing in great numbers. In five minutes they would be within a hundred yards. Nardon glanced round and met Flecter's gaze. Mingled scorn and determination swept over the former's face.

Flecter stood dumfounded.

Nardon was coolly sacrificing himself to save his fellows in the rear, and now did not mean to give in.

"No! it must not be, I'll go, sir."

Flecter rushed into the wider opening of the gap, fully exposed to the enemy's fire.

"Back, Nardon," he shouted, "back. There's time yet."

Nardon turned, but returned to his charge.

"Back, we're safe," again shouted Flecter, who was now with the noble little company.

Only then did Nardon turn full round to see the main body disappearing behind the hill.

They were safe. Nardon gave the order to retreat at the double. It was too late. As they started back, Flecter fell, hit in the side.

Nardon rushed to his side.

"Don't wait, Nardon. You'll be safe now, thank God. Forgive me, Nardon," he gasped, "forgive me," and he sank back.

Nardon saw that nothing could be done.

Ah! What was that. Reinforcements, thank goodness. They were saved.

But scarcely twenty of Company B had escaped. With their dead lay an officer, but it was not Captain Nardon.

Major Flecter had made his repentance at the cost of his life.

S. B.

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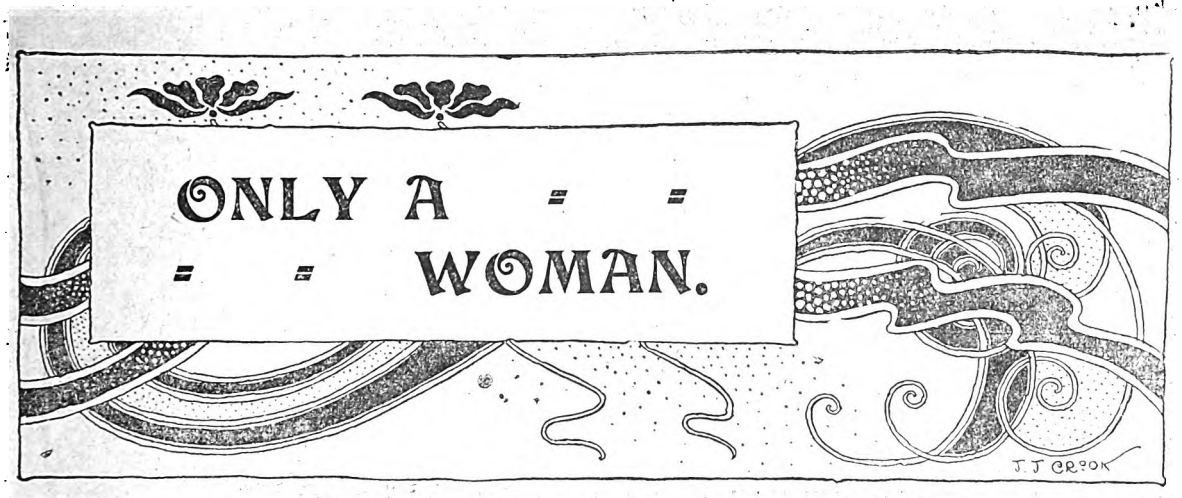

JESSIE TAURION was alone, with a curious ache in her heart, and the sounds of retreating footsteps beating wearily in her brain.

The footsteps ceased for a moment, a door banged, and then they echoed through the open window, slowly, firmly, and distinctly. There was something appealing in their slowness, but Jessie crushed down her rising pity, and taking up her brushes, began to paint steadily.

But the line between her brows grew deeper, the strokes of her brush slower and slower, until it dropped from her hand, making a smudge of bright red across the leg of the easel and on the floor in its fall. She put her hands up to her face and sat silently for a moment or two.

"I must learn to live without him," she said drearily. "It will be hard, but it is best. Oh! the greyness and loneliness of it." She sobbed, then with womanish inconsistency burst out, "Why didn't he explain? Why didn't he say he was sorry? He stood and blinked like an owl with a white face, and never said a word. The dolt. Why did he get so angry and say 'If a woman cannot trust she does not love.' Why did I say my love was dead? It isn't, Jack, it isn't, come back to me, come back."

She turned to the door, but there was no sound of footsteps, no answer. Sinking on the floor she buried her face in her arms, and tried with surging brain to realise the cost of the uprooting from her heart of a love she had deemed unworthily received.

Jessie Taurion was an artist, a woman full of poetry, common sense, and affection—but a woman. In giving her love to Jack Brayworth she had considered the possibilities before acknowledging to him the motive force his love was to her, and the strength she had gained since to him she had become one of the world's dearest women. It meant giving up her independence; and to a successful woman, a woman whose pictures were rapidly bringing wide fame to their painter, this is no small thing. But she gave it up cheerfully. It meant unlocking the doors of a barred world; it meant the merging of her life into that of another; it meant another state of existence. She had character, and treasuring this strong man's love, considered no sacrifice too great.

"Does he understand," she had often asked herself, "what marriage will mean to me?" and her heart and her common sense had answered "No."

She had not told him, had given him no hint, but, woman-like, was angry at his ignorance, and, lover-like, resented it. "Did his lack of perception or of thought betoken selfishness?"

Perhaps she was too analytical. It was not sufficient for her to know that Jack loved her because he loved her, or that she loved him because she did love him. She wanted reasons, almost to the chapter and verse, and in seeking the causes for it lost her love.

"Know thyself," is, doubtless, an excellent axiom, but it is infinitely better to know other people. Jessie Taurion knew herself so well that she hardly had time to know her lover.

Consequently she attributed entirely wrong motives to him, and he, instead of being greeted as was her custom, by a caress, on his appearance this morning received only coldness which he naturally resented.

His resentment angered her, and she lost her temper, accusing him of flirtation on the flimsiest pretext.

Bitterly hurt at her lack of trust, he had kept perfect silence, which annoyed her further, and then she had told him her love for him had died out of her heart.

Too proud, too hurt to ask explanation, he had merely said:

"It is only right. If a woman cannot trust, she does not love," and had left her.

Jessie crouched in her misery on the floor until the sun burning on her hair reminded her it was afternoon.

Then she rose and tried to work. But it was impossible. She had no heart. Colour she had gloried in meant nothing; it might have been black, and sadly she turned the easel to the wall and rang the bell.

A thought had occurred to her. Jack and she had been going to a gallery that afternoon, perhaps he had left a message with the maid. But she did not know Jack. There was no message.

Furious with herself for having thought his anger would relent, and vowing never to see him again, she packed up the dainty trifles he had given her; a piece of enamel, a quaint box covered with wrought-iron; a vestment of red brocade; a scent-bottle, the lid encrusted with turquoises; her engagement ring, an Egyptian signet, thousands of years old, which he had given her because it was his choicest treasure; a beaten silver bowl which he had filled every day with flowers; rich laces, pictures, photographs, a miniature of La Pompadour, were all heaped into a brass-mounted coffer, his gift also, and sent to his home.

Her studio was bare when she had stripped it of his gifts, but the anger was still in her heart, hot and fierce against him, and she scarcely felt the wrench. The

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past was better uprooted at once she felt, but her conscience told her that this step made its return impossible.

Jessie went away to Devonshire, leaving the easel with its picture to the wall, and worked steadily for a couple of months. An exhibition of her pictures brought her to London again, but only for a few weeks. In spite of the growing appreciation of her painting, she could not forget what had been. Her studio made her desperate. She could not bear to sit in it alone. All through the lonely weeks in the country she had felt that she alone was to blame, but pride and shame forbade her making the first advances.

In September she came back again, impelled by a reason she did not stop to fathom, and whilst all London was in the country or by the sea, she, the beggars and the cats shared the deserted squares and streets between them. Jessie would walk for hours at night through street after street, so that she might sleep through sheer physical weariness, and began a series of night scenes in London in September, which reflected the agony of mind and distress she was undergoing.

One night she had wandered far into the dreary outskirts of Bayswater, and suddenly discovered she had lost her way. It was bright moonlight, and she saw a man leaning against a wall near the end of the street. Running up to him she inquired the way, and to her horror found he was drunk. In answer to her question the drunkard turned round and leered at her, at the same time catching hold of her arm.

"You come along with me, Missie," he said, "I'll show yer the way proper."

Jessie gave a little scream of terror, and struggled to free herself. The sight of two men at the other end of the street gave her fresh courage, and she screamed louder still.

They ran up, the drunkard was knocked into the road, and then Jessie saw that one of them was Jack Brayworth. He made no sign. She felt paralysed, and with broken words of thanks walked away quickly.

About a week later, as she was driving home from a dinner at her sister's, she recognised a well-known figure standing near the gas-lamp at the end of the row of houses in which she lived. It was Jack Brayworth.

Flinging herself back in the cab, she passionately asked herself why he was there?

Then she remembered her maid had spoken of a man who was always hanging about the studios at night. Was it Jack, and was he always watching over her.

For the first time since she had driven her lover away, Jessie Taurion wept and wept bitterly. The tears bore away the barriers pride and womanly perverseness had builded over her heart, and after a sleepless night with the grey of the early dawn about her she wrote to Jack Brayworth.

"I cannot ask you to forgive me, since I have sinned too deeply against you. But I implore you to come to me. Your love was the strong arm on which I leant; it helped me to surmount all obstacles, and I cannot live without its support. I am entirely to blame, and I was utterly mad to speak to you as I did. I am very tired. Come to me."

In the dusk of the evening he came to her, and that night the rustling of the creeper over the window had a new meaning, and the distant hum of life a fuller sound of gladness to Jessie Taurion. A. Stockport.

The Romance of a Chemist's Shop.

When Theodore Burton first came to Banford, as manager of the little chemist's shop in the High Street, he thought he should have a dull time of it, but he soon changed his mind. Not that he knew many more people at the end of six months, than he had done at first, but he knew one, and that one comprised all Banford for him.

She came to the shop very often, as much as three times a week, and she always stayed for ten minutes or more, chatting gaily in her cheery cultivated voice. She was very pretty, too—or at least so thought Theodore—dark, with a bright, vivacious face, and such dancing, mischievous, blue eyes. But she had not been to the shop for nearly a week now, and Theodore was getting anxious, anxious about another matter too.

He had met her one evening, walking with a tall, dark man—a conceited looking fellow, Theodore thought—with whom she seemed to be on the best of terms, and he wondered who he was, and had been wondering ever since. Not that it mattered much to him, but he liked finding out things that puzzled him, so he resolved to discover who this fellow was. He hardly owned to himself how much he missed her, and how eagerly he looked forward to her next visit.

These visits were pleasant episodes in his monotonous life, he assured himself; her bright witty conversation cheered and amused him, and that was all. She could be nothing but a mere acquaintance to him, as he had been engaged for more than two years to Miss Clara Smith, a plain angular young woman in Leicester, but who possessed a neat little income.

Despite the fact of his engagement, however, Theodore saw no harm in a mild flirtation with his newly-formed acquaintance.

He had discovered that her name was Dorothy Williams, and she was not more than twenty-three he felt sure. But he must be careful, very, very careful.

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It would never do for her to get fond of him, which was more than likely she would do, seeing how handsome and fascinating he was, and he smiled complacently, and stroked his long golden moustache, as he caught a glimpse of his face in a strip of mirror which adorned the top of a fancy box of perfume.

But—ting, went the door bell and there she was, fair, smiling, and lovely as ever.

Theodore's heart seemed to leap to his mouth, and he actually blushed to the roots of his fair, luxuriant curls.

"Oh! Ah! Good morning, what may I have the pleasure of doing for you?" he stammered, trying hard to assume his wonted demeanour.

"Those dear little bottles in the window; I wish to know the price of each one so that I can choose," she answered smilingly. "I want a very pretty and yet inexpensive one, as the contents of my purse are limited."

"Suppose you take one now as a sample," Theodore suggested gallantly, "and then if you like the perfume you can always get another."

"Thank you, you are very kind," she replied a trifle primly, "but I think I would rather pay for it now."

She selected one and paid for it, but seemed in no hurry to go. Instead—to his great delight—she chatted pleasantly for quite a quarter of an hour, questioning the young chemist as to how he could afford to sell some articles so cheaply, and why others were so expensive; and expressing her opinions freely, relative to the merits and demerits of various toilet requisites. Theodore wished the conversation would change, and that she would talk of herself, but he was not bored by her questions and gave all the information in his power. After all, it showed how intellectual she was, and that she could take an interest in something other than a new dress, or pretty hat, though these latter evidently found favour in her eyes.

"I am so fond of the science of chemistry and drugs," she explained apologetically. "My brothers tease me about it, and say that I should belong to the pill-making fraternity; but you don't mind my tiresome questions, I know, you are so kind."

Mind! He would have gone on answering her questions for ever, as he hastened to assure her in somewhat modified terms. But alas! Pleasant moments come to an end all too soon. Another customer entered the shop, and having no further excuse for staying she took her deparure, thought not without reluctance, Theodore told himself triumphantly. When his other customer had gone, he found himself dwelling on his fair questioner's looks and words, with a persistence he could not shake off!

"I really believe I am in love with the girl," he muttered to himself, "and I'm positive she likes me too, or why does she come here so often? She doesn't buy anything much, it is only an excuse to get here to talk to me. Deuced awkward thing! What am I to do? If I throw over Clara she'll break her heart—and there's that money, too—but then, I can't have my lovely Dorothy break hers. Bother the girls! Why did the two of them fall in love with the same man? That's one of the penalties of being good looking. I must find out if Dorothy loves me, and if she does, well, Clara must go to the wall, money and all; and if she doesn't, why then, I can fall back on Clara, and no one any the wiser."

And having arrived at this satisfactory conclusion Theodore betook himself to his dinner, without one pang of remorse for the absent Clara, or her feelings, should Dorothy reciprocate his passion, which he hoped and believed she did.

Fortune favoured him. The next day was a half-holiday, and Mr. Burton closed his shop for a few hours, and set out for a long ramble through the woods, and as the unexpected always happens, the first person he saw walking ahead of him was—Dorothy.

A few rapid strides soon brought him up to her.

"How do you do, Miss Williams? This is an unexpected pleasure," he exclaimed, radiant with the delight he could not conceal. He fancied she did not look quite so pleased at first as she might have done, but she was soon as charming and bewitching as ever, and he felt that it was now or never, he would make a bold plunge, confident of success.

"I am more than glad I have met you," he resumed, "as I have something very important to say, something I could not say in the shop it is of infinite importance to me, as I venture to hope it will be to you. I——"

"I know what you are going to say," she interrupted hastily, "that I come to your shop too often, that people have begun to notice it, and so on. They are dreadful gossips about here, I know, my husband told me to be careful."

"Your what?" gasped Theodore.

"My husband. Didn't you know I was married?" she inquired sweetly.

"Know! How on earth should I know?" he returned in a strange voice. "Why didn't you tell me before?"

"Because you didn't ask me," she answered demurely.

"But why did you come to the shop so often, and—and talk so much," stammered the bewildered Theodore.

"Oh! I am afraid I have been very mean," she replied with a contrite air, "but my husband is setting up a large drug shop here and as you are the only chemist, I wished to find out your prices, so that we could undersell you as much as possible. Mean, wasn't it? But you know it is done every day in business."

"Was that fellow I met you with one night your husband?" he asked gloomily."

"I should say so," she replied, "as I don't go for a walk with any other 'fellow.'"

"Oh!" was all he said. To say that he had received a shock is saying little. His vanity was wounded and his pride hurt. He had received a blow from which he would be long in recovering. Thank goodness! Clara didn't know, she would never forgive him if she did, she was so jealous. He still had her and her money to fall back upon.

"Really, Mr. Burton, you seem quite cross," the sweet voice at his side exclaimed; "but you mustn't be, you must forgive me and let us still be friends. I must introduce you to my friend, Clara Smith, who is coming from Leicester to stay some weeks with me. I have written and told her all about you, and how nice and kind you were to me, and you'd never think how interested she was. She will be so amused when she hears that you thought I was single all the time. She isn't exactly pretty, but very, very nice. I am sure——" but Theodore suddenly remembered that he must hurry back to the shop, and raising his hat, almost flew away, leaving Dorothy smiling an enigmatical smile.

* * * * *

The next week the handsome Theodore had gone, and Banford knew him no more. A new manager—plain and middle-aged—presided over the little chemist's shop in the High Street.

VERA BROWNING.

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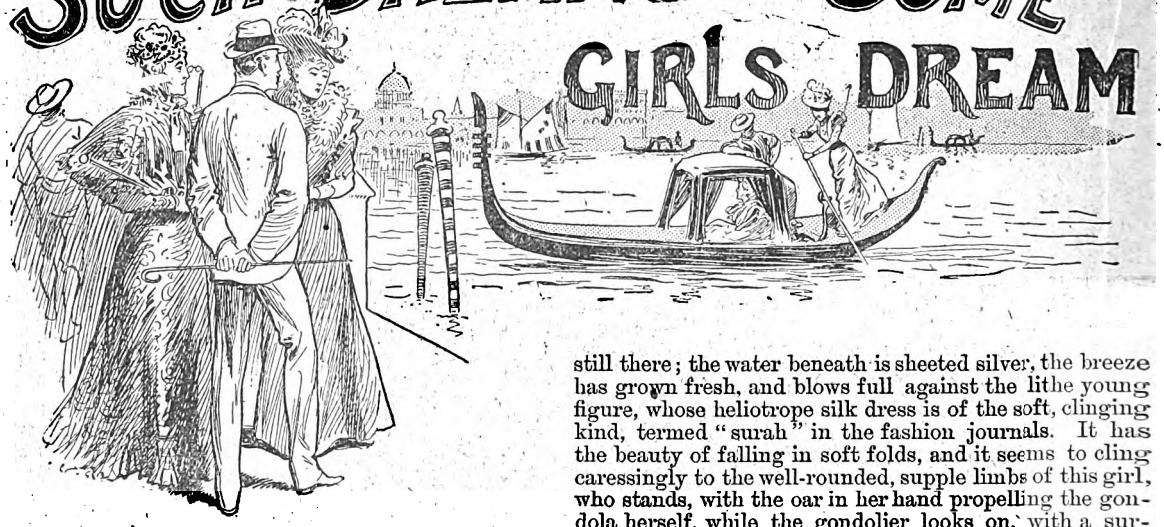
SUCH DREAMS AS SOME GIRLS DREAM



"See there!" exclaimed Mrs. Cadwallader, with a portentous wave of her hand—"one of that objectionable type of the English girl who brings discredit on our good breeding, and gives rise to erroneous ideas about our society amongst Continental people."

The good lady rustled all over with a sort of tremor of indignation. Her companions were a tall, aristocratic young girl, in a severely simple black satin dress, straight in its folds, clinging in its outline as the drapery of a statue, its sombre hue only relieved by three strings of amber beads wound closely about her throat; with a broad, black plush hat, and long black plumes, drooping over the pale, fair, high-bred face; and the other a young man, well groomed, with handsome dark eyes, a straight, positive-looking nose, a somewhat opinionated mouth, and, over all, that reserved and, at the same time, languid air supposed to be "good form" in exclusive circles.

The young lady slowly lifted her white eyelids, and faintly shrugged her drooping shoulders, as if to say, "Really, mamma, I have no interest in this sort of thing!"

Howard Winthrop, on the contrary, looked with a dawning interest kindling in his dark eyes.

It was a fresh October evening, and Venice was all aglow with light and sparkle. In the Plaza San Marco the white-coated bandsmen were making music in their own masterly manner.

Ladies in grand toilets sit and eat ices under the great arches, and street vendors of flowers and sweetmeats and lemonade, or the delicate white shell-work, and a hundred other trifles, go about with their wares. Red-sashed gondoliers, swarthy sailors, with great golden hoops in their brown ears, gorgeous Turks, Greek merchants, and the straight-browed Venetian ladies, with their dark, slumberous, melancholy eyes—all make a moving panorama of colour and light charming to the eye.

But our friends were not looking at this picture just now, but at a gondola near them, in which stood a young girl, her slight form thrown out in a cameo-like relief against the sky. The sun has set, but the after-glow is still there; the water beneath is sheeted silver, the breeze has grown fresh, and blows full against the lithe young figure, whose heliotrope silk dress is of the soft, clinging kind, termed "surah" in the fashion journals. It has the beauty of falling in soft folds, and it seems to cling caressingly to the well-rounded, supple limbs of this girl, who stands, with the oar in her hand propelling the gondola herself, while the gondolier looks on, with a surprised grin upon his face.

The light upon the flushed face shows intense and vivid colouring, and all the charms of youth and health, added to a sort of radiant independence of everybody and everything. The bronze gold hair that hangs in a bewitchingly soft, curly fringe almost down to the "wine-dark violet eyes," is carelessly blown by the same wind, and the long old-gold feather that decorates a plush hat of the same colour, sweeps out like a meteor upon the breeze.

"I knew I could do it, mamma," she is saying to a pale, delicate-looking woman, whose plain grey dress forms the greatest contrast to her daughter's. "It only needs practice to do anything."

Howard Winthrop could not resist the thrill of admiration that ran like a subtle electric fire through his whole being. The fresh, unconventional attitude, the radiant health and youth, the vigour, the fire, the *verve*.

At that moment, the long feather, having lost its hold in the rude struggle with the wind, fluttered away like some bright-winged bird, and sailing along for a moment with a sort of giddy delight in its freedom, dropped suddenly and softly as a golden shadow at the young man's feet.

He seized it rapturously but tenderly, and hastened nearer the water's edge. The flight had been noticed, and the gondola was turned toward the land.

The young lady looked about her as it stopped, and, having discerned a very handsome young man with her plume in his hand, she smiled a bewitching smile.

"It was carried to my feet," Howard said, bowing.

"She's dreadful for losing her things," said the mother, in a plaintive voice, hovering near, like a dim grey moth about a gorgeous butterfly. "Nothing ever stays on her that can get away."

"I would call that an evidence of the depravity of inanimate things," said Howard, with an admiring glance.

The mother looked puzzled. The daughter laughed.

"They come back, you see," she said.

"I should think they would," answered Howard. "I'm sure I wish I might."

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He was quite shocked at his own boldness, but perhaps more so at the girl's answer.

"I wish you would; we don't known anyone here."

Yet her face was so frank and ingenuous that he could not think evil of her cordiality.

"I should be glad to be of service to you in any way," he answered, readily. "I know Venice pretty well, as this is my third visit."

"We are not at a hotel, but at a *pension*, and it's very dull," she said. "We stayed one night at a place in the Plaza San Marco, but the people never go to bed there, and mamma could not sleep. We are abroad for her health, and so we had to find a quiet place, and it *is* quiet—oh, deadly quiet!"

Howard suddenly recollected his companions who were waiting for him, and drew out his card. The grey mother produced one of hers, and feebly seconded her daughter's invitation. The whole proceeding struck the young man as curious and unconventional in the extreme, as he walked back to his party. While he had looked at the radiant vision, it seemed correct and proper.

"They don't know me. I might be a blackleg and an adventurer. I hope they don't admit everyone so carelessly. The girl is so beautiful."

And he experienced a sort of pang at the fear that any one else should be taken into their acquaintance in the same unconventional manner.

"I can be of real service to them," he said to himself, as he took out the cards and read, "Mrs. John Stirling." "Miss Dulcie Stirling."

"Dulcie."

What an odd diminutive, yet it had a soft, clinging music about it that thrilled him. It was singing itself over and over again in his brain when he came upon Mrs. Cadwallader, looking very stately and sedate, and Miss Mabel with an additional frosting in her face and manner.

"Really, Howard, that very *outré* and curious person seemed to have something to say to you," said the elder lady.

But Howard did not satisfy the curiosity that was evident. He only bestirred himself to procure a gondola, and in a few moments they were afloat on the smooth, shining water. It is not yet dark, the after-glow has not yet faded.

The golden lamps shine out like golden flowers against the deep violet shadows. Domes and spires come out distinctly in that light, and all the serried masts of the merchant fleet at the mouth of the Quidecca stand up like lances. So they glide on till the darkness falls, and a pale crescent moon rises "like a silver sickle in a field of stars."

But Howard Winthrop is thinking of none of these things. He sees instead a slight figure in a pale purple gown, with a vivacious, sparkling face and wind-blown bronze hair. "She's deuced pretty, but 'bad form,'" he decides, as he lights his cigarette that night. Yet she had taken possession of his fancy, and seemed quite at home there.

No one could have been more astonished than our hero himself when, a few evenings after this, he found himself drifting over the sheeted silver of those same waters with the enchantress herself. How it had come about was not exactly clear to him; but it seemed as if the invitation had come from Miss Dulcie herself, and that her mother had failed at the last moment.

The girl frankly held out her hand: it was rosy-white and dimpled.

"We hire the gondola by the week," the young lady had volunteered, "and it's a pity to send it away with such a moonlight, too."

So Winthrop found himself at her side, feeling as if he were sailing in an enchanted boat on an enchanted sea.

"Mamma gets tired so soon," she says to him, frankly, "that I have to go about alone. One hour in a picture-gallery uses her up, and she doesn't remember anything about it, poor dear; so what's the use."

"But you are too young, and, excuse me, too pretty to go about without a chaperone," said Winthrop looking at the effects of moonlight on the glowing face that bloomed like a flower in that pallid light.

She wore a dress of Vandyke blue velvet, with a cape of white Spanish lace carelessly tied over it. About her neck was a quaint collar of filigree silver, and on her arms bracelets of the same delicate frostwork. A Rembrant hat of blue plush, with a long blue feather, held in place by a bird's silver claw, shaded but did not conceal the glory of her ruddy hair.

It gave Winthrop a sort of pang that he could not explain to look at her and think of her freedom.

It was not the proper thing at all.

"They have such musty, fusty ideas in this Old World," she said, smiling brightly up in his face, "I rather like to shock them. Perhaps I shock you, too?"

"Would you enjoy that?" the young man asked, evasively.

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"Oh no! I would rather you approved of me; though"—with a mutinous and bewitching smile—"I don't know that I would give up my own way to bring that about. I've been a good deal indulged—you have seen that, I know. The doctors told mamma long ago, when I was a child, that if I was opposed I would burst a blood-vessel and die. I'm afraid I've made use of her fear to get my own way. It's an ignoble confession to make, isn't it?"

"Yet you look extremely healthy," he answered, in a sceptical tone. "I own I should be tempted some time to oppose you. It's not healthful for any human soul to meet no crosses."

"Well, mamma consoles herself for her own weakness by thinking I may have a strong hand to rule me one of these days. She takes the most dismal views of matrimony, do you know, and says, 'Poor dear! she will suffer enough one of these days. Let her enjoy life now.'"

He ground his teeth in impotent rage when he saw his charmer leaning upon the Count's arm

"But you? I trust your views are more rose-coloured," said Winthrop, feeling his heart beat more rapidly, and half-despising himself for it.

What was this strange, impulsive creature to him?

"I? Oh, yes! I have my own dreams—what girl has not? I do not believe life is so leaden-hued as some say. The poets are particularly to blame for that, I think. They should be crowned with cypress instead of laurel, for all the dismal songs of grief and gloom they have perpetrated. But I have not seen the Fairy Prince yet—at least, I think I have not," with a mischievous look into Winthrop's eyes. "You know I am not eighteen, and not out."

Winthrop thought it would be hard to find a girl more emancipated, although she was not out.

"I predict all bright things for you," he said; "let me look at your hand. I learned palmistry once from an Arab."

The girl frankly held out her hand; it was rosy-white and dimpled. Its soft touch, as it lay in his own, thrilled Winthrop from head to foot.

"The line of life is——".

He hesitated. He knew it was all nonsense, but he felt his heart sink as he saw that mystic line so suddenly broken on the little rose-lined hand.

"Well, what is it? Shall I die soon? That will be when my husband contradicts me, I know."

Winthrop rallied, and spoke gayly.

"You will have a long life, a rich husband, and always have your own way. Here is a dark man who loves you."

It was quite in the approved gipsy style, and Dulcie nodded.

"Oh, yes. I know the dark man."

"What!" exclaimed Winthrop, in surprise. "I thought you knew no one."

"Oh, he is an Italian count we met at Trouville in the summer—a dark, gloomy fellow, with magnificent eyes. He has a history."

"They all have."

"He is very poor."

"They all are."

"And he talks English in a broken way, and in a low musical voice. He was teaching me Italian, and I am going on with the lessons when I get to Naples. He lives in Naples."

Winthrop could not account for the jealous pang that stabbed his heart.

"Mamma has been in constant terror lest I should fall in love with him on account of the romance of the thing; but I'm afraid of foreigners. I feel that Count Toriani could do any one of those dark deeds we read about in Italian romances; but there is an interest in being with a man who adores you," with a bright glance.

Winthrop winced.

"So he adores you, and tells you so?"

"Oh, yes. He reads me sonnets full of volcanic passion. He accounts for my indifference by believing that I am too young to be fully awakened to the best happiness of my life."

"And you go about with him?" Winthrop asked, in a dumb fury.

"Certainly. He is splendid-looking and a perfect gentleman. Besides he knows his country, as a foreigner could not do; and he appears to feel so much, that I cannot crush him at a blow—can I, now?"

Winthrop felt himself growing hard and cold at this information.

"You can only decide that for yourself," he said.

Somehow, the rest of the sail seemed to have lost its enchantment. They landed and climbed the sandy ridges that glisten in the silvery light.

Every pool is a molten mirror. Before them lies the placid lagoon, on one side a line of dark blue, with creamy waves crawling lazily upon the shore. It is the Adriatic.

It was in vain that Winthrop tried to withdraw himself from the subtle charm of Dulcie's society. In vain he repeated to himself that she was too unconventional—too impulsive for that strict and cool circle in which he moved at home.

Mrs Cadwallader shrugged her shoulders at the very mention of the girl, and Mrs. Cadwallader was the

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The Count stood glowering at them with gloomy eyes.

autocrat of his society. She had voted Miss Dulcie "crude—crude in the extreme," and there was scarcely a more significant term in that lady's vocabulary.

There was Mabel, a truly high-bred and perfect specimen of conventional breeding—a girl whose voice, musically modulated, was never raised above the regulation tone, whose step, floating and graceful, was never quickened by impulse, whose manner was cool, and quiet, and charming, but she charmed Winthrop no more.

He found himself longing for Dulcie's changing, ringing tones. There was everything in her voice, appeal, merriment, tenderness—it was as changed as her eyes, her face, her whole manner. She was never the same—a perpetual study, an eternal delight. She was *outré*, perhaps *bizarre*; but she fascinated him.

He spent all the time when he was away from her in steeling his heart against her, but with the first glance into her fearless bright eyes all his panoply fell from him, and he became her slave.

And so at last they find themselves together in Naples, and a new personage appears on the scene.

The tall, dark, melancholy nobleman, who expresses a whole record of past grandeur and fallen fortunes in his sallow, pathetic face and sombre, dark eyes, is seen everywhere with Dulcie.

Her mother seems to keep in the background as persistently as if she were indeed a grey moth, and shunned the daylight.

When the Count saw Winthrop, an antagonism seemed to spring up at once in his breast. He discerned a rival, and hated him from that moment.

As for our hero, he ground his teeth in impotent rage when he saw his charmer leaning upon the Count's arm, looking up with a bright smile into his face, listening to his broken sentences, as if they were the wisdom of the gods. He tried remonstrating with feeble Mrs. Stirling, who was just at that moment engrossed in a new symptom, and indifferent to everything else.

"It gives rise to remark," he said, "unless a young lady is engaged to the gentleman."

"Oh, dear me!" she wailed; "don't ask me to interfere. Dulcie does as she likes; she always has—she always will; I haven't the nerve to control her—and, after all, I'm sure of her, Mr. Winthrop. She is very independent, but she will do right always—I have that confidence about her. Do you know anything of Johumi's remedy for neuralgia? I have heard wonders of it."

Winthrop answered somewhat wildly, and got away in a discouraged mood. He must speak to the young lady herself. Most girls are keenly alive to rumour; and perhaps he might alarm her sufficiently to make her throw aside this languishing Count, who infuriated him so with his adoring airs.

It was a lovely sunset. As Winthrop stepped out upon the terrace between the sculptured vases full of trailing flowers, he saw a view which is, perhaps, the most famous in the world. The bay, like a shining crescent, lay before him, purple and emerald in the shadow of rocky headlands.

The fishing-barques, with their white wings, look like birds asleep on the blue waters.

There is a flicker of amber among the trailing ivies beneath him, and he hurries toward it. Dulcie is sitting there, idly picking some flowers to bits, a mosaic of bright leaves lies over her dress.

"So you serve the offerings of your victims?" he said, grimly.

"Oh, they are from the Count. I couldn't keep all he gives me."

"Does it never strike you that you might stop it, if you don't care for it?" Winthrop asked somewhat brusquely.

Dulcie opened her lovely eyes.

"But suppose it is not altogether unpleasant?"

"Oh, in that case it is quite correct, otherwise it might be better not to give rise to surmises that may be incorrect and injurious."

There was a slight rigidity about Dulcie's mouth and a little tremour in her voice.

"And why should *you* care?"

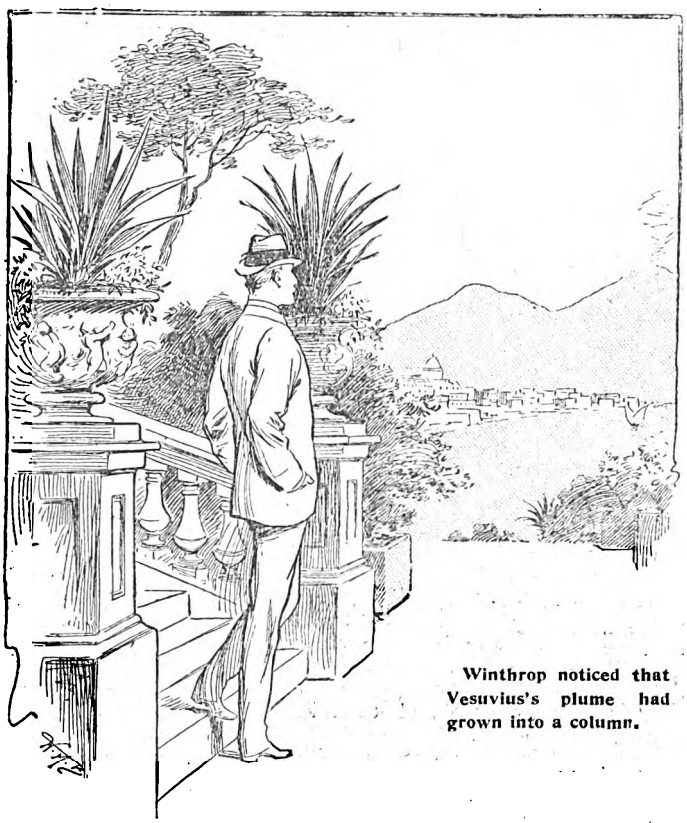
With those lovely eyes raised to his, the fresh young lips so near, the slender form within his reach, Winthrop's self-possession deserted him. A thicket of ivy and myrtle screened them from sight. He forgot everything but the rapturous beating of his own heart. In a second he had snatched her to his breast, and pressed a sudden kiss upon the scarlet lips.

"Because I love you, darling!" he murmured.

The golden-bronze head lay on his shoulder one second, while Dulcie said artlessly:

"Oh, I am glad—glad!" when a sudden rustle startled them. The Count stood glowering at them with gloomy eyes.

Winthrop started back, with a sudden impulse to knock him down, there was so much hate in the dark face. But he restrained himself—perhaps the man had



Winthrop noticed that Vesuvius's plume had grown into a column.

done him a service. He had interrupted a passing frenzy; yes, that was what our unworthy hero styled his unpremeditated confession.

"Leave me!" Dulcie whispered. "I must speak to him! I can calm the wild beast in him, I am sure!"

Winthorp was glad to go away. He felt quite breathless with the plunge he had taken. It was all over now—too late to escape.

Was it too late? He had been betrayed into a sudden declaration and a kiss. Well? Dulcie had heard many such, and had been kissed before, very likely. A girl so very unconventional—no, somehow Winthrop could not wrong her in his mind.

What was a kiss? He felt the touch yet upon his lips light as a rose-leaf, yet glowing as a flame. Should he give up all for that kiss? Dulcie was sweet and bewitching, but she was not the wife for him. She was "crude, undeniably crude."

He felt, somehow, all the harder to her that he had been betrayed into that weakness. He had looked upon himself as a self-poised, self-centred fellow, who had himself well in hand; this undisciplined rebound of his nature was owing to her.

Her unfettered nature had worked upon his own to his detriment; he must shake off the fetters.

He nerved himself to the task, and sat down to write. He would not see her again—he dared not. The very memory of her witchery stole to him like a subtle and bewildering perfume.

He must write.

Never was task so hard. Over and over again he attempted and tore into bits the unsatisfying result.

Now it was diffuse and kind; now it was too short and cold. At last, he kept one in despair.

It ran as follows:

My Dear Miss Dulcie,—I am called away so suddenly that I fear I shall not have the happiness of seeing you again. Forgive me for the liberty I took this afternoon. I cannot forgive myself. Believe me, the feeling was not feigned; but I scorn myself for the weakness that betrayed me into an expression of interest that I cannot indulge. Circumstances, our own spheres in society and the fitness of things, must all be consulted as well as that treacherous organ—the human heart. Make my adieux kindly to your mother.—With best wishes for yourself, I am,

Yours, very humbly and repentantly,
Howard Winthrop.

When the young man had dispatched this note, he began to pack hurriedly. He had not the nerve to meet the girl again after having sent it.

He resolved to wait until it was dark, and then to go. He could trump up some reason for the Cadwalladers.

The night was singularly alive and bright. Winthrop noticed that Vesuvius's plume had grown into a column; it grew beneath his eye, piling itself mass on mass. As he gazed, it was no longer a plume, but an arch that spanned half the horizon.

It grew rosy, fire-tipped. The dark billows were rose-crowned, the sombre mountains of smoke were flame-capped. The mountain was in eruption.

He paused to look. The sight charmed him and made him forget his journey for the moment.

There was a trembling in the earth, in the air. Then a volley of black vapour shot up, rent with veins of fire, like a cloud veined with lightning, and streams of lava—seething liquid flame—began crawling down the cone.

Standing so transfixed, Winthrop has forgotten everything. He is not aware of a dark shadow stealing behind him, or of the glitter of steel flashing near. Only when he hears a woman's cry and feels two round, young arms about his neck, does he realize that someone is crashing away through the shrubbery, and that Dulcie has fainted in his arms.

He lifts her to a long rustic seat near, and realizes for the first time that he has stopped near the garden—nay, that they are on the very spot where he had kissed her that very day. She lies there now pale as the stone Niobe that stands near, and he suddenly sees with a cold horror that there is blood streaming over her white dress.

But the lovely eyes are open for a moment, and an arm steals about his neck again.

"I saved you, did I not, darling? You are not hurt?"

"No, no—but you? I do not understand."

"It is a scratch. But the count's dagger was aimed for your heart. I have saved you—that is joy enough."

Then she fainted away again, and he is aware that the attendants are thronging about them—that the mother is hovering with feeble moans over her daughter—that a medical gentleman is examining the wound. "It is not serious," he says; and then Winthrop gives her up to other hands with a sickening feeling of reluctance, and she is carried into the house.

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He paces the garden-walks a long time, but scarcely looks at the wondrous panorama before him. Only he feels as if he, too, had undergone some strange convulsion of nature, as if a torrent of seething lava coursed through his veins instead of blood.

"And I have been ready to cast away such a love!" he groaned—"a love that could fling away life as a worthless thing for my sake. Oh, my darling, forgive me! I know I cannot live without you now."

Suddenly, the memory of the letter stabbed him like a dagger. It had not reached her, evidently, before she had left the house. His messenger had, indeed, stopped on the way to do a little courting on his own account.

"Oh, fool that I have been!" he cried, starting into a hurried walk. "My doom is sure if she sees that. She would never forgive that cursed, cold, heartless letter!—my proud darling!"

He hurried up to the hotel, hoping it might not yet have been delivered. He felt as if he would give ten years of his life to get that scrap of paper in his hand once more. He had some hope as he asked for Mrs. Stirling.

There seemed an unusual bustle about the halls. A flurried look in people's faces. Mrs. Stirling did not come to him. He made his way to their room. The door stood open.

"Is she worse?" he asked, as he caught Mrs. Stirling hurrying by. "Is the wound more serious than the doctor thought?"

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, go away!" moaned the mother. "She has burst a blood-vessel, the doctor says. It is not the wound at all, only he says the excitement may have brought it on. She was quite calm, and was reading a note someone brought her. She gave a strange cry as she looked at it, and the blood gushed from her mouth. There is no hope. I cannot be calm, and so they will not let me stay with her. No—no, you must not go in."

But Howard Winthrop heeded nothing. He strode onward to the couch upon which they had laid the wounded girl. She was ghastly white but conscious, and turned from him with a shudder.

He forgot conventionality then. It mattered not to him that his conduct was "bad form." He dropped on his knees at the bedside and gasped out:

"Forget it, Dulcie; it is not true. I have found out my own heart now, and know that you are my life. I love you—before Heaven, I love you!"

She lifted her languid eyes to him, and the shadow of a smile touched her pallid lips.

"I told you that I had never been crossed in my life. You see, when it came I could not bear it. I am going to die, because I cannot have my own way. I am a poor weak creature, after all."

"You are heroic," cried Howard, with a great sob in his throat; "do not slip away from me now, then I know your worth. Oh, darling! God has angels enough without you. Tell me—tell me you forgive."

She held out the crushed slip of paper she still had in her hand.

"Take it," she whispered faintly. "I forgive—and believe—in spite—of all—that you love me."

A grey pallor settled on her face, and Winthrop was hustled from the room to pace his own floor till the sudden hush that falls on all earthly sounds when one Presence enters settles down over all. He knew he had thrown away the most priceless boon ever offered to man, that he had murdered his own happiness for ever.

He could hear the "Never, never," whispered by the phantom years.

A voice that followed him with a ceaseless cadence of pain, saying always, "It might have been. It might have been."

FAYETTE CROSBY.

Someone is crashing away through the shrubbery, and Dulcie has fainted in his arms.

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RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM
Nos. 12 to 15.

No. 12.—First Prize. Ten shillings has been awarded to Miss Maud Abbott, of York Villa, Norbiton.

A copy of "The Impudent Comedian and Others," by Frankfort Moore, to:

Mrs. Newton, 1 George Street, Hedon, Yorks; D. Price-Williams, Hill Brow, Eastbury Road, Northwood, Middlesex; Miss L. Stafford, 24 Market Place, Great Yarmouth; Miss L. Godding, 32 Orchard Road, Southsea; M. David, The Towers, Crowthorne, Wellington College.

No. 13.—First Prize. Ten shillings has been awarded to Mr. J. McCoy, of Aughton Street, Ormskirk.

A silver-plated pencil-case has been sent to each of the following:

H. Sparks, 10 Mill Crescent, Tonbridge; T. W. Rose, Manor Cottage, Bitterne Park, Southampton; Miss N. Prichard, Donnington Manor, Stow-on-the-Wold; George Badger, 60 Shakespeare Street, Cardiff; F. Bessant, Eton Place, Falmouth.

No. 14.—First Prize. Ten shillings has been awarded to Mrs. A. Palmer, of Farnham, Stanley Road, Morecambe.

A copy of "The Raid of the Detrimental" to:

C. Lowther, 3 Jeffrey's Place, Oystermouth Road, Swansea; G. Beaver, 83 Drakefell Road, Nunhead, S.E.; P. Fletcher, 101 High Street, Newton-le-Willows; W. J. Webster, Abbey Terrace, East Malling, Kent; E. Gregory, 47 Barlow Road, Levenshulme.

No. 15.—First Prize. Ten shillings has been awarded to Mr. W. E. Morse, 11 South Terrace, Hastings.

A silver-pated pencil-case to:

Miss Lily Wright, 101 Holt Road, Liverpool; R. W. Pordige, Thornedene, St. Leonards; J. F. Galvin, 59 Royal Avenue, Belfast; M. A. Williamson, 56 Prince Street, Peterhead; Miss Jenkin, Rose Cottage, Tredegar Road, Ebbw Vale, Mon.

Solutions to Puzzles, Jan. 20.

No. 16.—Frolic. Key: Z 1, A 2, Y 3, B 4, and so on.

No. 17.—O a S t, B l O w, R u N n E r, C h A t, S i T e, L e E r.

No. 18.—

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        e     l o l
      r n o   e d e o n
  L o r d     N e l s o n
      d o e   d o l e r
        l     s n   r
```

No. 19.—He has fallen out of the frying pan into the fire.

No. 20.—

"For Time will teach thee soon the truth,
There are no birds in last year's nest!"
Longfellow's "It is not always May."

See *Short Stories* Feb. 24th.] [First Instalment.

BRITON OR BOER?

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT THE WAR.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "The Knight of King's Guard," by Ewan Martin, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source must be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. D. Wilson, 9 Argyle Street, Greenock. Attempts for this week's prize should deal with WAR ANECDOTES and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, February 12th. Post-cards only, please.

Reckoning Without the Hens.

ON the boundary of a large town on the Clyde, there lives an old woman, named Aunt Su, who makes a living by keeping a fews hens, etc., and who takes her eggs weekly to the town to sell.

One day, before she left the shop, the grocer said:

"Look here, Aunt Su, the grocers have held a meeting last night and they have decided to reduce the price of the eggs."

Aunt Su said nothing, but went her way.

Next visiting day, having picked the smallest eggs, she again called on the grocer, who on seeing the size of the eggs, said:

"Why, what is the meaning of this, why are the eggs so small?"

"Well," answered Aunt Su, "the hens held a meetin' las' night, wi' the result that they're no' goin' ta lay bigger anes ta the price has been raised."

The price was raised. D. W.

Beating the Record.

AN old Scotch housewife was debating with a neighbour on one occasion as to who of the twain could recall the windiest day in their Highland valley.

"I mind sic a wind blawin' ane winter," said the first speaker, "that thae rooks were five 'oors fleein' hame frae the North Brae tae their nesties at Hill Fell, which is no mair than twa miles."

"Hoots, wumman, that's juist naething at a'! Ah've minded it that windy that the rooks couldna' flee at a', an' had tae walk hame!"

W. C.

Not the Sort of Glass he Wanted.

A GOOD story is told of one of the new school of Scotch parsons who was recently preaching in a strange church in a village. Fearing his hair was not properly parted in the middle, or that he had a smudge on his nose, he quietly and significantly said to the beadle—there being no mirror in the vestry:

"John, could you get me a glass?"

John disappeared, and after a few minutes, returned with a parcel underneath his coat, which, to the astonishment of the parson, he produced, in the form of a lemonade bottle with a gill of whisky, saying:

"Ye mauna lat on about it, minister, for I got it as a great favour, and I wadna hae got it ava if I hadna said it was for you!"

Tableau! W. B.

The Jehu Again.

A FEW days ago the traffic in one of the principal London thoroughfares was being regulated by a policeman, who held up his hand to stop two or three cabs in order to let an old lady cross the road.

One cabby, however, did not stop immediately he saw the policeman's signal, which caused the bobby to sing out in a loud voice:

"Didn't you see me hold up my hand?"

"Well," said cabby, "it did grow dark suddenly, but I had all my work cut out to keep my horse from shying at your feet!" S. J. B.

The Worst of all Swindles.

WHEN a well-known theatrical lady was touring in America with her burlesque company, she arrived at a settlement in the Far West. Hers was the first dramatic company ever seen there, the "lecture hall" being generally occupied by panoramas of the Civil War.

A stage was fitted up in the hall, and an act-drop and curtain combined was painted.

On the night of the performance, the first to arrive was a six-foot miner. He paid his half-dollar, and took a front seat in the pit. After staring at the newly-painted curtain (representing a waterfall) for about ten minutes, he rose and went out. As he passed the ticket-taker he observed:

"Wall, that's the rankest panoramer ever I seed for half-a-dollar." K. D.

Not Quite Disinterested.

SOME years ago an active young fellow rushed on to the Temple Pier just in time to see the paddle-wheels of the steamer by which he wished to travel beginning slowly to revolve. Rather than lose the boat, he sprang on deck from the floating pier, clearing a distance of some three or four feet.

No sooner had he performed this not very hazardous achievement, when an elderly gentleman began to remonstrate with him on the foolhardiness of running so great a risk.

The young man could not help feeling flattered at the interest displayed on his behalf by one to whom he was a total stranger, and was on the point of giving vent to his feelings when the seemingly benevolent old gentleman thus concluded his remonstrance:

"You know, sir, you might have missed your footing and been drowned, in which case your family would probably have brought an action against the steamboat company, and I'm a shareholder!" S. H.

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She Put Her Foot Down.

A LITTLE girl had been ill, and had struggled through the early stages of convalescence. She had taken "nourishing" broths and "nourishing" jellies until her soul was weary of them.

One morning she electrified the family by sitting bolt upright in bed, and saying:

"I want you to take notice. I'm not going to take any more nourishment. I'm hungry and I want my dinner, and not another mouthful of nourishment will I eat."

N. F.

The Only Topic.

A TRAIN ran into a certain railway station last week, and a first-class passenger sprang out and ran into the refreshment-room for a cup of tea. The train started and he made a dash for it, but was pulled back by a porter. Furiously angry at losing the train, he assailed the porter with many severe words. The crowd on the platform sided with the official.

"He only did his duty," said one.

"He may have saved your life," said another.

"If you abused me like that, I'd give you something!" cried a third.

"I wouldn't mind," said the passenger bitterly, "only I'm under orders to sail with my regiment for the front to-morrow morning, and now I'll lose the boat."

For an instant the crowd was silent, then with one accord it turned upon the luckless porter.

"You officious rascal!" cried one.

"You ass! Do you know you're only the servant of the public?" shouted another.

"You scoundrel!" roared a third. "If I were the officer I'd pound the life out of you!"

W. J. O.

Told by One of the Regulars.

SOLDIERS belonging to line regiments are fond of telling stories at the expense of the militia. Here is one which was related before they came so prominently before the great B.P. owing to the present war.

While a certain militia regiment was encamped on a well-known common, a woman with her children came out there for an outing. During the time she was playing with the children a militiaman, passing, stole a loaf and ran off. The woman observing him, commenced calling:

"Stop thief!"

The colonel was close at hand, and, hearing the cry, rode up, asking the reason.

"That thief has stolen my loaf."

"Never mind," said the colonel, giving her half-a-crown; "this will get another for you. But for goodness' sake don't call 'Stop thief!' or I shan't have a man left in the regiment."

F. C.

Chaffing the War Office.

IN one of our military stations the following correspondence is recorded between the senior commissariat and the War Office:

"The senior commissariat officer requests forage allowance for a second horse, as the distance from U—— to N—— is seventeen miles, and as the senior commissariat officer has to visit it three times a week, the work is too much for one horse."

In due course the following reply was received by the commissariat officer:

"I am directed by the Under Secretary of State to inform you that your application for forage for a second horse cannot be entertained, as the distance from U—— to N——, as the 'crow flies,' is only ten miles."

To which the following reply was sent:

"Sir, I beg to inform you that I do not ride a crow—I ride a horse."

The forage for the second horse was granted, but the general officer commanding was requested to speak to the commissariat officer for his levity in official correspondence.

M. H.

The Prince of Wales's Joke.

THE Prince of Wales, it is said, occasionally likes to crack a joke over his mother's propensity for giving away Indian shawls.

At the Henley Regatta a year or two ago he was on a steam launch with a party engaged in scrutinising the other craft on the river. Their attention was especially drawn to a boat containing a pleasure party, one member of which was an elderly lady bearing a remarkable likeness to the Queen, and she seemed bent upon doing all in her power to heighten the resemblance.

One of the party on board the launch approached the Prince and ventured to draw his attention to the lady in question, jocularly suggesting that it was the Queen viewing the regatta *incognito*.

Just as His Royal Highness was levelling his field-glass upon her, she rose, and, taking the shawl on which she had been sitting, threw it round the shoulders of a young girl who was with her.

"It is undoubtedly the Queen," replied the Prince quietly. "She has discovered herself. I see that she has just presented one of her Indian shawls."

E. A.

People Who Ought to Marry.

THEY were discussing profound subjects with the cynicism that only youth can develop.

"I have given the subject serious thought," she said, "and I have decided long ago that I would never marry."

"That shows you are a woman of intellect," he answered admiringly, "I long ago reached the same determination."

"Marriage," she observed, "is a state in which the chance for sorrow is great and the prospect of happiness is small."

"Very true. And what is more, it is a confession that one's intellectual cultivation is insufficient to elevate him above the necessity of companionship."

He had been holding her hand all this time, but neither of them seemed to realise the fact.

"Every rule," she said thoughtfully, "is proved by its exceptions."

"Yes, and I was just thinking——"

"What, Orlando?"

"That two people who hold such similar views of life as you and I ought to manage to get on splendidly."

She blushed and sighed and murmured:

"I was just thinking that it is very seldom that folks find such a true bond of sympathy as we have discovered."

W. W.

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THE ANGEL OF THE REVOLUTION

By GEORGE GRIFFITH

CHAPTER LXVI.

ARMAGEDDON.

On the southern side of London the struggle between the Franco-Italian armies and the troops of the Federation had been raging all night with unabated fury along a curved line extending from Bexley to Richmond.

The railways communicating with the ports of the south and east had, for their own purposes, been left intact by the commanders of the League; and, so sudden and utterly unexpected had been the invasion of the force from America, and the simultaneous uprising of the British Section of the Brotherhood, that they had fallen into the hands of the Federationists almost without a struggle. This had enabled the invaders and their allies to concentrate themselves rapidly along the line of action which had been carefully pre-determined upon.

Landing almost simultaneously at Southampton, Portsmouth, Shoreham, Newhaven, Hastings, Folkestone, Dover, Deal, Ramsgate, and Margate, they had been joined everywhere by their comrades of the British Section, whose first action, on receiving the signal from the sky, had been to seize the railways and shoot down, without warning or mercy, every soldier of the League who opposed them.

What happened at Harwich had at the same time and in the same fashion, happened at Dover and Chatham. The troops in occupation had been caught and crushed at a blow between overwhelming forces in front and rear. Added to this, the International was immensely stronger in France and Italy than in Russia, and therefore the defections from the ranks of the League had been far greater than they had been in the north.

Thousands had donned the red ribbon as the Signal flashed over their encampments, and when the moment came to repel the assault of the mysterious grey legions, that had sprung from no one knew where, the bewildered French and Italian officers found their regiments automatically splitting up into squads of tens and companies of hundreds, obeying other orders, and joining in the slaughter of their former comrades with the most perfect *sang froid*. By daybreak on the 6th the various divisions of the Federationists were well on their way to the French and Italian positions to the south of London. The utmost precautions had been taken to prevent any news reaching head-quarters, and these, as has been seen, were almost entirely successful.

The three army-corps sent southward with General le Gallifet met with a ruinous disaster long before they came face to face with the enemy. Ten of the fleet of thirty war-balloons which had been sent to co-operate with them, had been manned and commanded by men of the International. They were of the newest type and the swiftest in the fleet, and their crews were armed with the strangest weapons that had yet been used in war. These were bows and arrows, a curious anachronism amidst the elaborate machinery of destruction evolved by the science of the twentieth century, but none the less effective on that account. The arrows, instead of being headed in the usual way, carried on the end of the shaft two little glass tubes full of liquid, bound together, and tipped with fulminate.

When the fleet had been in the air about an hour these ten aerostats had so distributed themselves that each of them, with a little manœuvring, could get within bowshot of two others. They also rose a little higher than the rest. The flutter of a white handkerchief was the signal agreed upon, and when this was given by the man in command of the ten each of them suddenly put on speed, and ran up close to her nearest neighbour. A flight of arrows was discharged at the gasholder, and then she headed away for the next nearest, and discharged a flight at her.

Considering the apparent insignificance of the means employed, the effects were absolutely miraculous. The explosion of the fulminate on striking either the hard cordage of the net or one of the steel ribs used to give the gasholder rigidity broke the two tubes full of liquid. Then came another far more violent explosion which tore great rents in the envelope. The imprisoned gas rushed out in torrents and the crippled balloons began to sink, at first slowly and then more and more rapidly, till at last the cars, weighted with screws, machinery, and explosives, struck the earth with a crash and exploded like so many huge shells amidst the dense columns of the advancing army.

In fifteen minutes each of the ten captured aerostats had sent two others to the earth, and then, completely masters of the position, those in charge of them began their assault on the helpless masses below them. This was kept up until the Federation troops appeared. Then they retired to the rear of the French and Italian columns and devoted themselves to burning their stores and blowing up their ammunition-trains with fire-shell.

Assailed thus in front and rear, and demoralised by the defection of the thousands who, as soon as the battle became general, showed the red ribbon and echoed the fierce battle-cry of the Federation, the splendid force sent out by General le Gallifet was practically annihilated by midnight, and by daybreak the Federationists, after fifteen hours of almost continuous fighting, had stormed all the positions held by the French and Italians to the south of London, the batteries of which had already been destroyed by the air-ships.

Thus, when the *Ithuriel* passed over London on the morning of the 7th, the position of affairs was as follows: The two armies which had been detached by the Tsar and General le Gallifet to stop the advance of the Federationists had been destroyed almost to a man. Of the two fleets of war-balloons there remained twenty-two aerostats in the

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hands of the Terrorists, while the twenty-five sent by the Tsar against the air-ships had retired at nightfall to the depôt at Muswell Hill to replenish their stock of fuel and explosives. Their ammunition-tenders, slow and unwieldy machines adapted only for carrying large cargoes of shells, had been rammed and destroyed with ease by the air-ships during the running, or rather flying, fight of the previous afternoon,

At sunset on the 6th the whole available forces of the League which could be spared from the defence of the positions, numbering more than three million men, had descended to the assault on London at nearly fifty different points.

No human words could convey any adequate conception of that night of carnage and terror. The assailants were allowed to advance far into the mighty maze of streets and bye-ways with so little resistance that they began to think that the great city would fall an easy prey to them after all. But as they approached the main arteries of central London they came suddenly upon barricades so skilfully disposed that it was impossible to advance without storming them, and from which, as they approached them, burst out tempests of rifle and machine-gun fire, under which the heads of columns melted away faster than they advanced.

Light quick-firing guns, posted on the roofs of lofty buildings, rained death and mutilation upon them. The air-ships, flying hither and thither a few hundred feet above the house-tops, like spirits of destruction, sent their shells into the crowded masses and wrought the most awful havoc of all with their frightful explosives, blowing hundreds of men to indistinguishable fragments at every shot, while from the windows of every house that was not in ruins came a ceaseless hail of missiles from every kind of fire-arm, from a magazine rifle to a shot-gun.

When morning came the Great Eastern Railway and the Thames had been cleared and opened, and the hearts of the starving citizens were gladdened by the welcome spectacle of train after train pouring in laden with provisions from Harwich, and of a fleet of steamers flying the Federation flag, which filled the Thames below London Bridge, and was rapidly discharging its cargoes of food at the wharves and into lighters.

As fast as the food could be unloaded it was distributed, first to the troops manning the barricades, and then to the markets and shops, whence it was supplied free in the poorer districts and at the usual price in the richer ones. All that day London feasted and made merry, for now the Thames was open there seemed to be no end to the food that was being poured into the City, which twelve hours before had eaten its last scanty provisions. As soon as one vessel was discharged another took its place, and opened its hold filled with the necessaries and some of the luxuries of life.

The frightful butcheries at the barricades had stopped for the time being from sheer exhaustion on both sides. One cannot fight without food, and the defenders were half-starved when they began. Rage and the longing for revenge had lent them strength for the moment, but twelve hours of incessant street fighting, the most wearing of all forms of battle, had exhausted them, and they were heartily glad of the tacit truce which gave them time to eat and drink.

As for the assailants, as soon as they saw conclusive proof that the blockade had been broken and the City victualled, they found themselves deserted by the ally on whose aid they had most counted. While the grip of famine remained on London they knew that its fall was only a matter of time; but now—if food could get in so could reinforcements, and they had not the remotest idea as to the number of the mysterious forces which had so suddenly sprung into existence outside their own lines.

Added to this their losses during the night had been something appalling. The streets were choked with their dead, and the houses into which they had retired were filled with their wounded. So they, too, were glad of a rest, and many spoke openly of returning to their lines and abandoning the assault. If they did so it might be possible to fight their way to the coast and escape out of this huge death-trap into which they had fallen on the very eve of their confidently-anticipated victory.

So, during the whole of the 7th there was little or no hard fighting in London, but to the north and south the grey legions of the Federation fought their way mile by mile over the field of Armageddon, gradually driving in the two halves of the Russian and the Franco-Italian armies which had been faced about to oppose their progress while the other halves were making their assault on London.

As soon as news reached the Tsar that the blockade of the river had been broken he had ordered twelve of his remaining war-balloons to destroy the ships that were swarming below London Bridge. Their fuel and cargoes of explosives had been renewed, and they rose into the air to execute the Autocrat's command just as Natasha had taken leave of Arnold on her errand of mercy. He fathomed their design at once, and instantly changed the course of the *Ithuriel* to the north-eastward. As soon as he had got within easy range he said to his lieutenant, who had just come on deck:

"Mr. Marston, those fellows mean mischief. Put a three-minute time fuze on a couple of No. 3 fire-shells and load the bow guns."

The order was at once executed. He trained one of the guns himself, giving it an elevation sufficient to throw the shell over the rising balloons. As the sixtieth second of the first minute passed he released the projectile. It soared away through the air and burst with a terrific explosion about fifty feet over the ascending aerostats.

The rain of fire spread out far and wide and showered down upon the gas-holders. Then came a concussion that shook the air like a thunderclap as the escaping gas mixed with the air, took fire, and exploded. Seven of the twelve aerostats instantly collapsed and plunged back again to the earth, spending the collective force of their explosives on the slopes of Muswell Hill. Meanwhile the second gun had been loaded and fired with the same effect on the remaining five.

Arnold then ran the *Ithuriel* up to within a mile of Muswell Hill, and found the remaining thirteen war-balloons in the act of making off to the northward.

"Two more time-shells, quick!" he cried "They are off to take part in the battle to the north, and must be stopped at once. Look lively or they'll see us and rise out of range!"

Almost before the words were out of his mouth one of the guns was ready. A moment later the messager of destruction was speeding on its way, and they saw it explode fairly in the midst of the squadron. The second followed before the glare of the first explosion had passed, and this was the last shot fired in the aerial warfare between the air-ships and the war-balloons.

The effect of these two shots was most extraordinary. The accurately-timed shells burst, not over, but amidst the aerostats, enveloping their cars in a momentary mist of fire. The intense heat evolved must have suffocated their crews instantaneously. Even if it had not done so their fate would have been scarcely less sudden or terrible, for the fire falling in the cars exploded their own shells even before it burst their gas-envelopes. With a roar and a shock as though heaven and earth were coming together a vast dazzling mass of flame blazed out, darkening the daylight by contrast, and when it vanished again there was not a fragment of the thirteen aerostats to be seen.

"So ends the Tsar's brief Empire of the air!" said Arnold, as the smoke of the explosion drifted away. "And twenty-four hours more should see the end of his earthly Empire as well."

"I hope so," said Natasha's voice at his elbow. "This

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awful destruction is sickening me. I knew war was horrible, but this is more like the work of fiends than of men. There is something monstrous, something superhumanly impious, in blasting your fellow-creatures with irresistible lightnings like this, as though you were a god instead of a man. Will you not be glad when it is over, Richard?"

"Glad beyond all expression," replied her lover, the angry light of battle instantly dying out of his eyes as he looked upon her sweetly pitiful face and melting eyes. "But tell me, what success has my angel of mercy had in pleading for the lives of her enemies?" he continued, slipping his arm through hers and leading her aft.

"I don't know yet, but my father told me to ask you to go to him as soon as you could leave the deck. Go now, and Richard, remember what I said to you when you offered me the empire of the world as we were going to Aeria. No one has such influence with the Master as you have, for you have given him the victory and delivered his enemies into his hands. For my sake, and for Humanity's, let your voice be for mercy and peace—surely we have shed blood enough now!"

"It shall, angel mine! for your sweet sake I would spare even Alexander Romanoff himself and all his staff!"

"You will never be asked to do that," said Natasha quietly, as Arnold disappeared down the companion-way.

It was nearly an hour before he came on deck again, and by this time the *Ithuriel*, constantly moving to and fro over London, so that any change in the course of events could be at once reported to Natas, had shifted her position to the southward, and was hanging in the air over Sydenham Hill, the head-quarters of General le Gallifet, whence could be plainly heard the roar of the tide of battle as it rolled ever northward over the hills of Surrey.

An air-ship came speeding up from the southward as he reached the deck. He signalled to it to come alongside. It proved to be the *Mercury* taking a message from Tremayne, who was personally commanding the Army of the South in the *Ariel*, to the air-ships operating with the Army of the North.

"What is the message?" asked Arnold.

"To engage and destroy the remaining Russian war-balloons, and then come South at once," replied the captain of the *Mercury*. "I am sorry to say both the *Lucifer* and the *Azrael* have been disabled by chance shots striking their propellers. The *Lucifer* was so badly injured that she fell to the earth, and blew up with a perfectly awful explosion; but the *Azrael* can still use her fan-wheels and stern propeller, though her air-planes are badly broken and twisted."

Arnold frowned at the bad news, but took no further notice of it beyond saying:

"That is unfortunate, but, I suppose some casualties were inevitable under the circumstances." Then he added; "I have already destroyed all that were left of the Tsar's war-balloons, but you can take the other part of the message. Where is the *Ariel* to be found?"

The captain of the *Mercury* gave him the necessary directions, and the two air-ships parted. Within an hour a council of war, consisting of Natas, Arnold, and Tremayne, was being held in the saloon of the *Ithuriel*, on the issue of which the lives of nearly two millions of men depended.

CHAPTER LXVII.

VICTORY.

IT was a little after three o'clock in the afternoon when Natas, Tremayne, and Arnold ended their deliberations in the saloon of the *Ithuriel*. At the same hour a council of war was being held by Generals le Gallifet and Cosensz at the Crystal Palace Hotel, Sydenham, where the two commanders had taken up their head quarters.

Since daybreak matters had assumed a very serious, if not desperate aspect for the troops of the League to the south of London. Communication had entirely ceased with the Tsar since the night before, and this could only mean that his Majesty had lost the command of the air, through the destruction or disablement of his fleet of aerostats. News from the force which had descended upon London told only of a fearful expenditure of life that had not purchased the slightest advantage.

The blockade had been broken on the east, and, therefore, all hope of reducing the city by famine was at an end. Their own war-balloons had been either captured or destroyed, thousands of their men had deserted to the enemy, and multitudes more had been slain. Every position was dominated by the captured aerostats and the air-ships of the Terrorists. Even the building in which the Council was being held might be shattered to fragments at any moment by a discharge of their irresistible artillery.

Finally, it was practically certain that within the next few hours their head-quarters must be surrounded, and then their only choice would lie between unconditional surrender and swift and inevitable destruction by an aerial bombardment. Manifestly the time had come to make terms if possible, and purchase their own safety and that of their remaining troops.

Both the generals and every member of their respective staffs saw clearly that victory was now a physical impossibility, and so the immediate issue of the council was that orders were given to hoist the white flag over the tricolour and the Italian standard on the summits of the two towers of the Crystal Palace, and on the flagstaffs over the head-quarters.

These were at once seen by a squadron of air-ships coming from the north in obedience to Tremayne's summons, and within half-an-hour the same squadron was seen returning from the south headed by the flag-ship, also flying, to the satisfaction of the two generals, the signal of truce. The air-ships stopped over Sydenham and ranged themselves in a circle with their guns pointing down upon the head-quarters, and the *Ariel*, with Tremayne on board, descended to within twenty feet of the ground in front of the hotel.

As she did so an officer wearing the uniform of a French General of Division came forward, saluted, and said that he had a message from the Commander-in-chief of the Federation forces. Tremayne returned the salute and said briefly:

"I am here. What is the message?"

"I am commissioned by General le Gallifet, Commander-in-Chief of the Southern Division, to request on his behalf the honour of an audience. He awaits you with General Cosensz in the hotel," replied the Frenchman, gazing in undisguised admiration at the wonderful craft which he now for the first time saw at close quarters.

"With pleasure. I will be with you in a moment," said Tremayne, and as he spoke, the *Ariel* settled gently down to the earth, and the gangway steps dropped from her side.

As he entered the room in which the two generals were awaiting him, surrounded by their brilliantly-uniformed staffs, he presented a strange contrast to the men whose lives he held in the hollow of his hand. He was dressed in a dark tweed suit, with Norfolk jacket and knickerbockers, met by long shooting boots, just as though he was fresh from the moors, instead of from the battlefield on which the fate of the world was being decided. General le Gallifet advanced to meet him with a puzzled look of half-recognition on his face, which was at once banished by Tremayne holding out his hand without the slightest ceremony, and saying:

"Ah, I see you recognise me, General!"

"I do, my Lord Alanmere, and, you will permit me to add, with the most profound astonishment," replied the

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General, taking the proffered hand with a hearty grasp. "May I venture to hope that with an old acquaintance our negotiations may prove all the easier?"

Tremayne bowed and said:

"Rest assured, General, that they shall be as easy as my instructions will permit me to make them."

"Your instructions! But I thought——"

"That I was in supreme command. So I am in a sense, but I am the lieutenant of Natas for all that, and in a case like this his word is law. But come, what terms do you propose?"

"That truce shall be proclaimed for twenty-four hours; that the commanders of the forces of the League shall meet this mysterious Natas, yourself, and the King of England, and arrange terms by which the armies of France, Russia, and Italy shall be permitted to evacuate the country with the honours of war."

"Then, General, I may as well tell you at once that those terms are impossible," replied the Chief of the Federation quietly, but with a note of inflexible determination in his voice. "In the first place, 'the honours of war' is a phrase which already belongs to the past. We see no honour in war, and if we can have our way this shall be the last war that shall ever be waged on earth.

"Indeed, I may tell you that we began this war as one of absolute extermination. Had it not been for the intercession of Natasha, the daughter of Natas, you would not even have been given the opportunity of making terms of peace, or even of unconditional surrender. Our orders were simply to slay and spare not, as long as a man remained in arms on British soil. You are, of course, aware that we have taken no prisoners——"

"But, my lord, this is not war, it is murder on the most colossal scale!" exclaimed the General, utterly unable to control the agitation that these terrible words evoked, not only in his own breast, but in that of every man who heard them.

"To us war and murder are synonymous terms, differing only as wholesale and retail," replied Tremayne drily; "for the mere names we care nothing. This world war is none of our seeking, but if war can be cured by nothing but war, then we will wage it to the point of extermination. Now here are my terms. All the troops of the League on this side of the River Thames, on laying down their arms, shall be permitted to return to their homes, not as soldiers, but as peaceful citizens of the world, to go about their natural business as men who have sworn never to draw the sword again save in defence of their own homes."

"And his Majesty the Tsar?"

"You cannot make terms for the Tsar, General, and let me beg of you not to attempt to do so. No power under heaven can save him and his advisers from the fate that awaits them."

"And if we refuse your terms, the alternative is what?"

"Annhilation to the last man!"

A dead silence followed these fearful words so calmly and yet so inflexibly spoken. General le Gallifet and the Italian Commander-in-Chief looked at one another and at the officers standing about them. A murmur of horror and indignation passed from lip to lip. Then Tremayne spoke again quickly, but impressively:

"Gentlemen, don't think that I am saying what I cannot do. We are inflexibly determined to stamp the curse of war out here and now, if it costs millions of lives to do so. Your forces are surrounded, your aerostats are captured or destroyed. It is no use mincing matters at a moment like this. It is life or death with you. If you do not believe me, General le Gallifet, come with me and take a flight round London in my air-ship yonder, and your own eyes shall see how hopeless all further struggle is. I pledge my word of honour as an English gentleman that you shall return in safety. Will you come?"

"I will," said the French commander. "Gentlemen, you will await my return," and with a bow to his companions, he followed the Chief out of the room and embarked on the air-ship without further ado.

The *Ariel* at once rose into the air. Tremayne reported to Natas what had been done, and then took the General into the deck saloon and gave orders to proceed at full speed to Richmond, which was reached in what seemed to the Frenchman an inconceivably short space of time. Then the *Ariel* swung round to the eastward, and at half speed traversed the whole line of battle over hill and vale, at an elevation of eight hundred feet, from Richmond to Shooter's Hill.

What General le Gallifet saw more than convinced him that Tremayne had spoken without exaggeration when he said that annihilation was the only alternative to surrender on his terms.

The grey legions of the Federation seemed innumerable. Their long lines lapped round the broken squadrons of the League, mowing them down with incessant hailstorms of magazine fire, and overhead the air-ships and aerostats were hurling shells on them which made great dark gaps in their formations wherever they attempted anything like order. Every position of importance was either occupied or surrounded by the Federationists. There was no way open save towards London, and that way, as the General knew only too well, lay destruction.

To the east of Shooter's Hill the air-ship swerved round to the northward. The Thames was alive with steamers flying the red flag, and carrying food and men into London. To the north of the river the battle had completely ceased as far as Muswell Hill.

There the Black Eagle of Russia still floated from the roof of the Palace, and a furious battle was raging round the slopes of the hill. But the Russians were already surrounded, and manifestly outnumbered five to one, while six aerostats were circling to and fro, doing their work of death upon them with fearful effectiveness.

"You see, General, that the aerostats do not destroy the Palace and bury the Tsar in its ruins, nor do I stop and do the same, as I could do in a few minutes. Do you understand now why you could not make terms for Russia?"

"What your designs are Heaven and yourselves only know," replied the General with quivering lips. "But I see that all is hopelessly lost. For God's sake let this carnage stop! It is not war, it is butchery, and we have deserved this retribution for employing those infernal contrivances in the first place. I always said it was not fair fighting. It is murder to drop death on defenceless men from the clouds. We will accept your terms. Let us get back to the south and save the lives of what remain of our brave fellows. If this is scientific warfare, I for one, will fight no more!"

"Well spoken, General!" said Tremayne, laying his hand upon his shoulder. "Those words of yours have saved two millions of human lives, and by this time to-morrow war will have ceased, I hope for ever, among the nations of the west."

The *Ariel* now swerved southward again, crossed London at full speed, and within half-an-hour General le Gallifet was once more standing in front of the Crystal Palace Hotel.

As it was now getting dusk the search-lights of the air-ships were turned on, and they swept along the southern line of battle flashing the signal, "Victory! Cease firing!" to the triumphant hosts of the Federation, while at the same time the French and Italian commanders set the field telegraph to work and despatched messengers into London with the news of the terms of peace. By nightfall all fighting south of the Thames had ceased, and victors and vanquished were fraternising as though they had never struck a blow at each other, for war is a matter of diplomacy and Court intrigue, and not of

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personal animosity. The peoples of the world would be good enough friends if their rulers and politicians would let them.

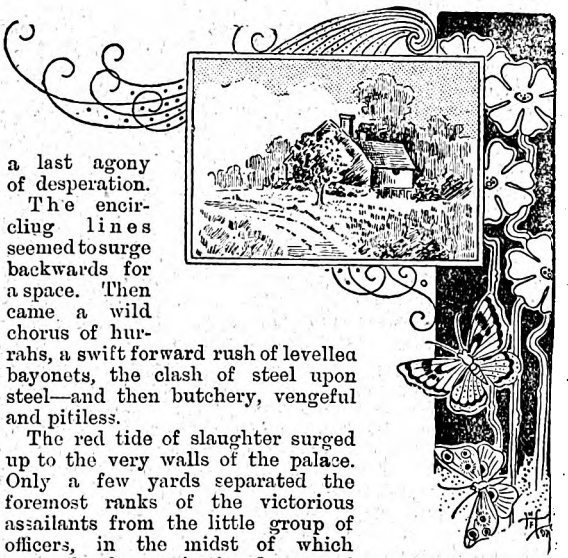
Meanwhile the battle raged with unabated fury round the head-quarters of the Tsar. Here despotism was making its last stand, and making it bravely, in spite of the tremendous odds against it. But as twilight deepened into night the numbers of the assailants of the last of the Russian positions seemed to multiply miraculously.

A never ceasing flood of grey-clad soldiery surged up from the south, overflowed the barricades to the north, and swept the last of the Russians out of the streets like so much chaff. All the hundred streams converged upon Muswell Hill, and joined the ranks of the attacking force, and so the night fell upon the last struggle of the world-war. Even the Tsar himself saw that the gigantic game was virtually over, and that the stake of world-empire had been played for—and lost.

A powerful field search-light had been fixed on the roof of the palace, and, as it flashed hither and thither round the area of the battle, he saw fresh hosts of the British and Federation soldiers pouring in upon the scene of action, while his own men were being mown down by thousands under the concentrated fire of millions of rifles, and his regiments torn to fragments by the incessant storm of explosives from the sky.

Hour after hour the savage fight went on, and the grey and red lines fought their way up and up the slopes, drawing the ring of flame and steel closer and closer round the summit of the hill on which the Autocrat of the North stood waiting for the hour of his fate to strike.

The last line of the defenders of the position was reached at length. For an hour it held firm in spite of the fearful odds. Then it wavered and bent, and swayed to and fro in a last agony of desperation.



The encircling lines seemed to surge backwards for a space. Then came a wild chorus of hurrahs, a swift forward rush of levelled bayonets, the clash of steel upon steel—and then butchery, vengeful and pitiless.

The red tide of slaughter surged up to the very walls of the palace. Only a few yards separated the foremost ranks of the victorious assailants from the little group of officers, in the midst of which towered the majestic figure of the White Tsar—an Emperor without an empire, a leader without an army. He strode forward towards the line of bayonets fringeing the crest of the hill, drew his sword, snapped the blade as a man would snap a dry stick, and threw the two pieces to the ground, saying in English as he did so:

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"It is enough, I surrender!"

Then he turned on his heel, and with bowed head walked back again to his staff.

Almost at the same moment a blaze of white light appeared in the sky a hundred feet above the heads of the vast throng that encircled the palace. Millions of eyes were turned up at once, and beheld a vision which no one who saw it forgot to the day of his death.

The ten air-ships of the Terrorist fleet were ranged in two curves on either side of the *Ithuriel*, which floated about twenty feet below them, her silvery hull bathed in a flood of light from their electric lamps. In her bow, robed in glistening white fur, stood Natasha, transfigured in the full blaze of the concentrated search-lights. A silence of wonder and expectation fell upon the millions at her feet, and in the midst of it she began to sing the Hymn of Freedom. It was like the voice of an angel singing in the night of peace after strife.

Men of every nation in Europe listened to her, entranced, as she changed from language to language, and when at last the triumphant strains of the old eighteenth century Song of the Revolution, came floating down from her lips through the still night air, an irresistible impulse ran through the listening millions, and with one accord they took up the refrain in all the languages of Europe, and a mighty flood of exultant song rolled up in wave after wave from earth to heaven, a song at once of victory and thanksgiving, for the last battle of the world war had been lost and won, and there was peace on earth at last.

(*To be continued.*)

"Doctor, my wife has insomnia—lies awake most of the night. What shall I do for her?"

"Get home earlier."

Husband: "Woo! Hoo! Great snakes! Why do you set that alarm clock so that it will go off like that?"

Wife: "That is to remind me it's time to wind it up, my dear."

"Of course, Nora, you know that marriage is a very serious thing," said Mrs. Forthingham to her cook, who had told her that she was about to set up housekeeping for herself.

"Yes'm, I know that," replied Nora; "but it isn't half so serious as being single."

Two sisters visiting in Ireland got into conversation with a tenant of their hostess. One of the girls, who is quite stout, asked the old Irish woman if she would have known them for sisters.

"Well," was the answer, with a smile that would have put the blarneystone itself to the blush, "ye look alike; but yer sister's slender, while you, miss—well you favour the Quane."

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About three miles from Cambridge is a valuable object lesson to the nation as to how the people may be kept on the land, and be thereby prevented from crowding into already over-populated cities. Twenty-four or twenty-five years ago a farmer turned his attention earnestly to fruit-farming, and made it pay from the outset. A few acres sufficed at first; to-day some thousands of acres are under fruit culture in the little old-world village of Histon and the adjacent district. What was the secret of his great success? It lay mainly in the foresight, skill, energy, and hard work in adapting means to an end.

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The Brain Gymnasium.

On this page, under the title, "The Brain Gymnasium," appear each week a series of puzzles calculated to occupy the attention of the competitors, with interest and profit to themselves, during the long winter evenings. Many of the tasks set will be comparatively easy of solution, while others will be designed with a view to taxing the abilities of the most proficient in this direction.

In these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the sender of the greatest number of correct solutions, and to the senders of the ten next highest number of correct ones will be presented either one of our silver-plated pencil cases or a copy of a popular six-shilling novel. Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, Short Stories, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by Monday, February 12th, 1900.

No. 34.

Form a word square from the equivalents of "not distant," "not employed," "to unite," "to take notice."

No. 35.

One-third of Thames, one-sixth of London, two-fifths of Wales, and one-fourth of York, form an English river. What is it?

No. 36.

The following are "pied proverbs," each group of letters making one word. Rearrange so that the proverbs may be read.

1. Glenarin si rebtet ntha sheosu, lsadn ro ymeon.
2. Os goln sa yuo ear itgnnaor eb ton adselma ot nlera.
3. Diseslen si eth tpnaer fo eivc dan ymreis.
4. A dogo dwro rof a dab oen si thowr humc, dan sctos etitll.
5. Ilo adn htrut lwli tge utpspoemr ta tsla.
6. A oogd eman wlil enisb fro evre.
7. A dab dwonu shlea; a bda eman skill.
8. Rbeett ot eb aelno ntah ni dba pocmyna.
9. Gdnoi ngonith si iondg lli.
10. Ysa wlle si dgoo, tub od lwle si rebett.

No. 37.

Using but five different letters, form the name of a native. By transposing two letters for two others, the same name can be read backwards.

No. 38.

I am the title of a well-known book. Divide me into four parts. My first consists of countless grains, my second is a crossing, the last and greater portion of my first forms my third, while my fourth, if rearranged, signifies a counsellor.

No. 39.

An Enigma.

While I, 6, 7, 8, my miserable dinner, 6, 7, the old hotel, I saw a 5, 6, 7, run over the floor, and presently a man came in and showed us a box which he said contained an 1, 2, 3. He wanted to let it out, but we were afraid to have it done. When I went to the landlord to pay my bill, I found the old 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, had charged me enormous 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and I refused to pay the full amount. He became quite 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and, though I could not understand a word he said, he hissed me out. So I came away and left him practising his 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. What were they?

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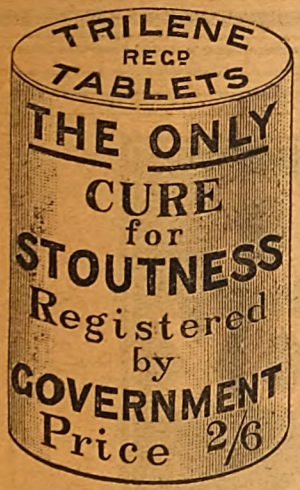
ALL FAT PEOPLE

Can be **CURED** by taking

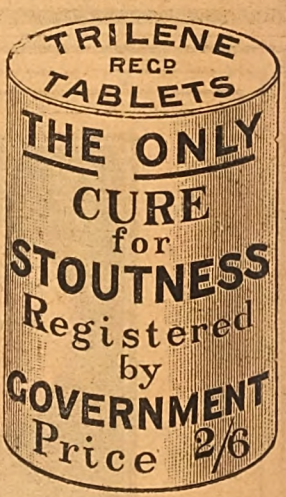
TRILENE TABLETS Regd



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

Send **2s. 6d.** to THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C,



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

'Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife foun the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

Mrs. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

Miss CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st. and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 2llb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me. "Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Riseholme Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if the had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity.".

FATHER T. M. BYRNE, of Holy Cross Abbey, Sligo, writes: "When I began your Tablets I was 12st. 5lb.; I now scale at 10st. 11lb.—my case, too, is hereditary."

Mrs. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. McLEOD, 44, Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. WHITEHOUSE, of Poplar Avenue, Edgbaston, writes: "My husband is in splendid health, and has lost 15lb. in weight since taking the Tablets; I am sure I thank you on his account."

Mrs. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

MR. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs, says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mr. BUTLER, Surgeon, M.R.C.V.S., of Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient has lost 1st. in weight whilst taking your Tablets."

Mrs E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver nr Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 62 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

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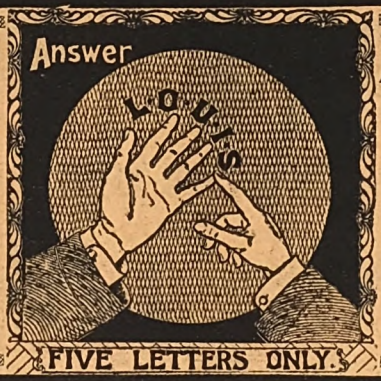
VELVETEEN?



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OROCO SOX

A New Invention to keep the feet warm and dry yet allowing perfect ventilation

18 pairs post free for 1/-

State size required.

A boon for tender & tired feet

OROCO M'F'G. Co.
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WILL SUIT YOU DOWN TO THE GROUND.

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No Hard Work.

NEW PICTURE COMPETITION STARTS IN THIS WEEK'S "ILLUSTRATED WAR NEWS."

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 581. FOR WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 17TH, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

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AND
LUNG & THROAT AFFECTIONS.

The salubrious atmosphere of
PINE AND EUCALYPTUS FORESTS
can be secured at home (thus saving an expensive journey abroad) by using the

"SANITAS" FUMIGATOR
(Sanitas Inhalers, 1/- and 2/6).

2/6 each.

"SANITAS" OIL
(1/- and 4/- Bottles) is the best possible inhalant, and is a powerful Germicide and Oxidant.

"To breathe 'Sanitas' is to breathe health."—
GORDON STABLES, C.M., M.D., R.N.

"SANITAS" EMBROCATION,
a magnificent preparation in 8d., 1/- and 2/6 Bottles.

Pamphlet Free.

Complete: as in use.

THE "SANITAS" Co. Ltd., Bethnal Green, London.

A Peep into the Stomach.

About sixty years ago, Dr. Beaumont, of the United States army, happened to come across a young Canadian boatman named Alexis St. Martin. In a skirmish in which the Doctor's regiment was engaged, this St. Martin received a gunshot wound in the lower part of the Chest wall, which healed up, leaving an opening that led directly into the Stomach.

Dr. Beaumont seized the opportunity which had so curiously come his way. He engaged St. Martin as his servant, and the young man allowed all sorts of experiments to be performed upon his digestive Organs. Different articles of food were eaten by St. Martin, and the action of the Gastric Juice upon them in the Stomach was carefully watched.

The results of these experiments, showing the relative digestibility of various articles of Food, are given in a Tabulated Statement in our book entitled "What to Eat and What to Avoid." As a result of more recent investigation by artificial means, the period is also shown which these same articles take to digest, if after each meal a dose of Guy's Tonic be taken. We shall be pleased to send a copy of this Booklet, post free, to any reader of "Short Stories" who applies for it to Guy's Tonic Company, 12 Buckingham Palace Road, London, S.W.

As a Remedy for Digestive Disturbance, depressing pains, and oppression after eating, and for preventing Food becoming like a Weight at the pit of the Stomach, Guy's Tonic is Invaluable. People who take it after meals Digest their Food thoroughly and completely, so that the Body is far better Nourished in every way, and there is an entire absence of those unpleasant Symptoms which make Food and eating a bugbear to so many.

"Immediate Benefit is Derived."

Mr. Bayle St. John, Journalist, of Church Road, Teddington, S.W., writes:—

"I firmly believe Guy's Tonic is the only genuine "Remedy known for Indigestion and kindred Ailments. "Immediate benefit is derived by taking this Valuable "Preparation. I myself know of several cases of "Indigestion, with its troublesome companions, Flatu-"lence, Loss of Appetite, Nausea, Headache, and "Nervousness, where Guy's Tonic has proved a successful "cure after everything else had failed."

A new size (Six Ounce) Bottle of Guy's Tonic, price 1s. 1½d., is now on Sale at all Chemists and Stores.

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These series of pens neither scratch nor spurt. They glide over the roughest paper with the ease of a soft lead pencil. An assorted sample box for 7 stamps from the works, Birmingham.

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can safely **Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

Send 2s. 6d. to **THE TRILENE CO.**, Sole Proprietors, **66 Finsbury Pavement, London.**

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 29 Walnall Road, Bucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 28lb., and I am cured." Mrs. Darnley-Smith, of Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, says: "Tablets have reduced me very much." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Comston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

VARICOCELE.

Every man suffering from Varicocele and the allied troubles, should send for treatise, describing their Causes, Symptoms, Results, and Successful and Painless Treatment without surgical operation or the use of cumbersome trusses and electrical appliances. Will be sent sealed, post free, three stamps.

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is sold by grocers, oilmen, and stores, everywhere, because it is wanted everywhere.

It is easy to buy, but care is necessary, otherwise, when you come to wash clothes or scour, you will find you have taken a substitute or imitation.

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A SUM of from 12s. to 25s. per week can be earned in spare hours or evenings by either sex everywhere.—Send addressed envelope for particulars to Box 24, Eclipse Works, 89 Aldersgate Street, E.C.

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I was for years; by chance I came across a simple home remedy that reduced me from 17st. to 10st. 12lbs., and I will willingly send particulars **free** to any sufferer enclosing stamp. Mrs. L. E. FELL, 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

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Men who are weak and suffering from nervous exhaustion, loss of vigour, Varicocele, &c., can be successfully and permanently cured without operation or detention from business by THE DR. COLLINS most improved and rational method medical science has ever yet produced.

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THE ONLY EFFICACIOUS SUBSTITUTE FOR COD LIVER OIL.

DEVONSHIRE CREAM

(REALLY GENUINE.)

IN PATENT AIR-TIGHT TINS.

½lb., 1s. 4d.; 1lb., 2s. 4d.; 2lb. 4s.

INCLUDING TIN AND POSTAGE.

Mrs. Conyers,
MORCHARD BISHOP, DEVON.

HAVE YOU EVER TRIED KEATING'S LOZENGES FOR YOUR COUGH?

DR. GABRIEL, M.D., L.R.C.P.

writes from Routh Park, Cardiff, Sept. 28th.

"I have now prescribed them for the "last 8 years in my hospitals and private "practice, and find them of great benefit. "I certainly and most strongly "recommend them."

Sold everywhere in Tins 1/1½ each.

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Send me an envelope (stamped and addressed) and I will tell you how to remove all superfluous hair **free of charge.** (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Miss E. V. (Room 3), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

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Zox Cures Influenza

ZOX is the discovery of a London Chemist, who found it of a remarkable benefit for Influenza patients. It is free from injurious substance, as certified by Dr. A. B. Griffiths, F.R.S.E. 1l. box of ZOX Powders, and 1/1½ bottle of ZOX Tonic is Guaranteed to cure any ordinary case of Influenza Hundreds of grateful letters. **ZOX CO., 11 Hatton Garden, London, E.C.**

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When a lady, who has discovered a simple means of Self-Cure will be happy to send particulars of same to any sufferer from this distressing complaint. Free on receipt of stamped addressed envelope. ADDRESS:

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63 HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON, W.C.

INDIGESTION STAMPED OUT

A LADY WRITES:
"Your TASTELESS INDIGESTION POWDERS have worked WONDERS. I am WELL and ENJOY MY FOOD."

The Prescription of a well-known Medical Man, prepared by fully qualified Chemists.

Send stamps or P.O. for 1s. 1½d. for sample 12 packets, mentioning this paper, to

D. JAMIESON, TOWER CHAMBERS, LIVERPOOL.

A WOMAN'S LOVE.

HE watched her as she moved about among her guests, a gracious figure, full of dignity and ease; charming, whether she stood a moment idly playing with her great fan, letting her meditative eyes wander about the room, or moved from group to group with just the right word, the sympathetic glance, or ready smile for each. He had watched her hundreds of times before, finding her lovelier every time.

She wore a gown of black lace, and at her breast there was a little knot of Parma violets—a deep, fragrant cluster. Durant had walked four miles that afternoon, and had paid an absurdly exorbitant price for the satisfaction of seeing them there. Well, he had it. He even fancied he detected her in a half-stolen, fleeting caress. Certainly more than once she had bent her face tenderly to their fragrance while she stood apart.

Durant had drawn a little aside into the half-seclusion of the deep window, the better to watch her undisturbed. On the little table beside him lay her books, a dainty basket of confections, a glove, and other trifles. His hand stole wistfully from one to another, and he pleased himself with the fancied contact of her fingers.

"Looking at that Holbein?" said a gruff voice at his elbow. "You well may! Stupid subject, and a wretched light, but fine! Ah, we can't better that much. Those old masters! It's the fashion to turn up your noses nowadays, but the root of the matter was in them."

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Durant turned with a start. He knew before he turned who his interlocutor was, the man who of all in his profession he most revered, the great artist Hood.

There had been years when Durant would have esteemed it glorious good fortune to exchange a word with the master. To-night, so absorbed was he in his own feverish fancies and desires that he almost resented the interruption.

"The Holbein?" he said. "Oh, yes! I've seen it before. Very fine indeed, I believe," mechanically.

The old painter cast a curious glance from under his shaggy brows at the young man.

"And you," said he abruptly, "what have *you* been doing? We saw the 'Sappho'"—alluding to a picture which had made a sensation at the Melbourne Exhibition, and had carried its unknown young painter into an enviable popularity and recognition at a bound—"we saw the 'Sappho,' what comes after?"

Durant's brow grew slightly ruffled.

"A—not much, as yet," he reluctantly confessed. He added rather forcedly: "I have some things begun. I have not been in a working mood lately. By and by——"

He was uncomfortably conscious of the piercing glance of those far-seeing eyes, and drew himself up a trifle stiffly in resentment.

"I hope so," said Hood. "Success, young man, should be a spur, not a curb," as he moved away.

It was not unkindly said, but it stung Durant unreasonably. He watched moodily the fine, erect figure of the old man, for whom everyone made way, and then his gaze turned again with a passionate determination to the woman he loved.

Guests were making their adieux, and she stood giving her hand to one and then another with a courteous grace.

"Going?" said a voice behind her, "and what of the Holbein? Great, of course. Ah, when will our young artists do work like that?"

"Never," answered the voice of Hood, bitterly; "never—as things are! They waste their youth; they have no conscience for their art. I despair!"

"You are in a blue mood to-night," was the laughing response. "But the Holbein—the Holbein——"

"I know nothing of your Holbein," answered the master gruffly.

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"But you went to see it?" persisted the other.

"And saw instead what spoiled my temper. Look there, Anthony. You see that young man dreaming beneath the Holbein?"

"Whom? Durant?"

"Yes, Durant—the painter of the 'Sappho,' a picture full of faults, I grant you, but a masterpiece. What colour! What feeling! A picture on which to build the structure of a noble fame. That man has promise—genius!"

"H'm! ah!—no doubt you are right. Everyone speaks of him. But what has he done of late?"

"Done!" answered the old artist angrily; "he has done nothing—absolutely nothing—since the 'Sappho!' What is worse, he never will do anything."

"But, my dear sir," expostulatingly.

The two men turned to meet the composed smile of their young hostess.

"Sir," interrupted Hood severely, "I have spoken to him. He has neither ambition, hope, nor strength. I spoke three words to him, and measured him. Clever, he may be—it is a clever age—nothing more. His future is already past. He has committed the fatal sin for the artist—he has set something, no matter what, between him and his art. Clever he may be, will be, doubtless—great never."

There was a little, sharp, clicking sound behind him.

"Oh, my dear Miss Heatherton, your lovely fan!" exclaimed a regretful voice. "How did you do it?"

The two men turned to meet the composed smile of their young hostess, who held in her hand the shattered sticks of her great fan.

"It was absurdly fragile," she said serenely, laying it aside, and holding out her hand to the artist. "You are leaving us already?"

"Alas! yes," Hood replied, bowing with old-world courtesy. "Late hours and old age are ill friends. Make my adieux to your uncle, and tell him he has a treasure in his Holbein."

She let her hand lie in his a moment. He thought she looked a little weary. "Good-night," she said, "and—thank you!"

They were all gone at last; yet the young hostess stood before the fire in the outer room alone and absorbed in thought. Mechanically she bent her head above the violets, which lay drooping in her bosom, and, as if this action had decided her, she lifted her head and moved towards the inner room.

As the heavy *portière* fell behind her, Durant's longing, eager eyes met hers, and, without a word, he drew her silently into his arms and held her so, against his heart, a long, silent moment.

"Darling!" broke like a sob from his lips; and still she forbade him nothing, but let him hold her, clasp her, kiss her as he would; only her lips and eyelids trembled.

"Sweetheart," he murmured, exultingly, between his kisses, "you do love me—you do"

A sigh that was almost a sob answered him. With a sudden movement she freed herself and, turning from him, threw herself into a chair.

"Now," thought Durant, "what is it?"

After a moment's perplexity he went behind her and put his hands on either side of her head with a gentle touch

"I will kiss away her mood," he thought, smiling; and bending above her he upturned slowly to his own a face of ice and marble.

"Esmond," she said; and there was an expression in her eyes which made his hands fall silently, "Esmond, why did you not tell me of Herdsman's offer?"

A little wave of vexation crossed the young man's face, and he coloured, but answered carelessly:

"I dare say I should have—but why should I, after all? It was of no moment."

She gave him a swift glance, and then made a little gesture of invitation with her hand.

"Come and sit down. I want to talk with you."

He took a cushion, tossed it at her feet, and threw himself thereon.

She looked at him uneasily.

"Had you not better sit on the sofa or in a chair?"

He shook his head and possessed himself of her hand. "I prefer this."

"Very well. You will guess, Esmond, that I want to talk about you and your work."

She paused.

"Well," he said indifferently, seemingly more absorbed in the hand upon whose every finger he was pressing kisses.

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Again she looked at him—a look of uncontrollable distress, which he did not see.

"We have spoken of it," she said gently, after the fleeting glance, "a thousand times, all the winter long, without result; but now there is a reason why we should decide at once, and, Esmond—we—must!"

He lifted up his head and looked at her.

Under that gaze she grew very white.

"You mean——"

"I mean that if you are ever to do anything, ever to fulfil your promise, you must go to Europe to study, live, work among artists and all that your art needs—and you will never find a second opportunity like this."

"Like what?"

"Like this which Mr. Herdsman offers you. To go with him, under the prestige of his name—it is to have the *entrée* at once of the art circles of all Europe; to go under the best conditions, in the pleasantest companionship, and at a time when you most need it. Is it true he sails on Friday?"

"Yes," answered Durant coldly.

"So much the better. It will be easier to go quickly, and you—you should be at work. You waste your strength here. There is every—every reason why you should go. Esmond, you ought, you must!"

She put her free hand on his entreatingly.

He shook it off.

"For Heaven's sake, Marguerite," he said, "speak plainly. Don't torture us both unnecessarily. I don't know what iron resolve to make us both miserable you have taken now, but I tell you frankly I have borne all I can. You know what I have endured already, and—I am flesh and blood! You say you want me to go abroad; well and good. Do you mean you want me to go without you? After all that has passed—all these months of waiting and suspense—is that your meaning?"

"Yes," she said, "I mean it. Wait; let me finish now. We have argued, and discussed, and waited until we have no longer any judgment left, and we are both—both nervous and worn out. You have been in a perfect fever for months past. It is of no use; the thing must end."

"You forget to say," he put in bitterly, "what has been the cause—the sole cause—of all these wretched months—this fever! If you would have simply consented to marry me, Marguerite——"

He broke off with a sudden passionate change, throwing himself upon his knees beside her.

"Consent now—only say you will marry me and we will start for Europe next week! I will show you. Work!—you shall see what I can do with your love to stimulate me. You say I waste my time—that I have done nothing all the winter. I know it, I know it; but I can do nothing while I live under this killing tension! I am like a man half-mad, benumbed, under a spell. With you—I would live. I have power—I know it; power and genius. With you, how I would work! And as for happiness—oh! darling, darling, let us make an end of all this torture. You do love me—only say you will go with me, bravely, nobly!"

His voice shook. He trembled like a leaf.

"Impossible!" The faint, chilling word fell from her lips. He simply would not heed it.

"It is not impossible! It is easy, wise, sensible!" he declared. "We are free; we love each other; that alone would make all easy. We have little money—what of it? We could live on almost nothing in Paris for a little, while I painted and made myself famous.

You should want for nothing. I would work night and day—for you—and think it happiness. It is in me to be great, with you I could—I would be. Only believe—only try."

"Yes," she said, "I know—and the picture is—is tempting; but it is not fairly drawn, Esmond. In the first place, I am not wholly free; my uncle has a claim on me, which I cannot, ought not wholly to disregard. And we—you and I—have next to nothing. You would be burdened at the outset with the care of providing bread and butter. All your strength and energy would go to meet daily demands, instead of being devoted singly to your art. Alone you can face privations, and never feel them, which would be a galling weight and chain if I were there. Esmond, I will never marry a man on these terms."

"Will you tell me," he said, checking himself, bitterly, "precisely what you would like to have me do?"

"Yes," she said, "I will tell you—and you will hate me for it! I would have you go away, to study, to work, for months, a year, two years, until you have laid the foundations of a name and fortune; and because I know your temperament and—and weakness I wish you to go utterly free, bound by no tie, even a tacit one. I wish to be to you a friend—the best of friends—a help, not a hindrance. I should like"—she gave him a swift look—"I should like you to write to me often, constantly, freely, of all your work, plans, hopes—provided," she added, with slow, distinct emphasis, "they are the letters of a friend to a friend. There must be no love-letters; nothing but unrest and wretchedness will come of your keeping yourself in a fever that way. I would rather give up all, not hear from you. You think me very hard, but what do I ask? Only that you should give your service first where it is first due. Yes, no woman's love on earth should supersede your art. And for the rest,"—she smiled a little sadly—"a knight of old thought it no hardship to serve his lady with years of waiting and knightly deeds. I don't think he reproached her for expecting him to prove his title to her favour. It is so utterly unreasonable for us to demand something more than a man's unsupported assurance that he loves us?"

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"Oh, you are fortified in reasons. You have all the wisdom on your side," he said bitterly. "I have only love on mine. So then," he said, "this is what it comes to. As I stand you will have none of me. Laying fame and riches at your feet, you may—relent!"

"If you choose to put it so—yes."

"I see; 'unto him that hath shall be given; from him who hath not, even——'".

He caught his breath sharply.

"So this is woman's love?"

"Yes," she answered, "this is woman's love."

"I have read," he said bitterly, "of women who lived otherwise; of women whose delight it was to go step by step beside the men they loved. There have been those who have given themselves freely to serve a man's genius; who have been his critics, helpers, models even."

"Yes," she said, "I have heard of such women. History does not record their end."

"At all events they loved—and lived—and were not ashamed nor afraid of it, unlike the women upon whom men waste their hearts and souls to-day. Pshaw! of what use to talk? We speak a very different language. There is one thing, though." He came nearer and looked down at her with an icy bitterness. "Has it ever occurred to you," he said, speaking with a cutting coldness—how close akin to fire—"has it ever entered your head, Marguerite, that, when your beautiful, desirable end is reached, and I am rich and famous, and you love me; it may be—too late? —that just possibly you may learn the value of the love you despise, when it is no longer yours?"

"You have all the wisdom on your side," he said bitterly. "I have only love on mine."

He hated himself before the words had passed his lips; he knew they were ignoble, unmanly, base, but he was half-insane with wounded pride and love.

She sat as if turned to ice.

After all it had not hurt her much he thought, after a quick, remorseful glance.

"Yes," she said at last, coldly, "I—I have thought of it. It is one of the reasons why I will have no shadow of a bond between us. You are absolutely free from this moment. I will take my chance."

"And you have dared to think—to make me think—you loved me!" he cried passionately. "Well, I know now at least; and you cannot be more anxious to have me gone now than I shall be to go."

He turned and strode to the door. His hand was on the *portière*.

"Esmond!"

He stopped, wavered, looked around.

Her yearning face was toward him, and her arms were outstretched.

Anger, bitterness, furious pride fell from him, and without a word he turned to her, knelt beside her, and with a low sob, laid his head upon her knees.

"My poor boy! my poor boy!" She caressed him as a mother does a child; and then, as she bent her lips to the curls of his bowed head, a single low word escaped them.

Durant lifted his head quickly; he caught her hands in his and fastened his eyes upon her with such a relentlessly probing gaze, that her own eyes were fain to fall beneath it.

"Oh," he said despairingly, "if I could understand you! Cold as you are, I do believe you love me better than you know. If you would but have the courage—if you would but let yourself go. Darling! sweetheart!"

He felt her tremble all over; felt her yielding, melting, changing, and he took a swift resolve.

"Don't speak," he cried, springing to his feet and holding both her hands. "Not another word to-night! We are both worn out. Don't even try to think. I will go, and you must rest. To-morrow, when we are both quieter, we will talk this over calmly, and decide. Don't tremble so! I will abide by your decision. I swear I will, even though it kills me—but not to-night. There," he added, tenderly; "say good night and I will go; you are so tired."

She pulled herself together. "Yes," she said, wearily, "that will be best. Good night."

She sat as he had left her, her head resting listlessly on her hand, her face half hidden. When at last she raised it it was full of conflicting purposes. Then she walked restlessly up and down the room. She stood beneath the Holbein, and the old painter's words rang cuttingly in her ears.

"He has committed the fatal first sin for an artist—he has set something between himself and his art. His future is already past."

And it was love of her—he had said so—which had snapped this vigorous promise. His love of her! An unutterable sadness filled her heart.

"A greater love would have risen by it," she said to herself—"a greater love, or——"

She stopped; even to herself she would not say,—"a greater nature."

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"Only clever, never great." The stinging phrases pursued her. "And yet," she thought to herself, with scorching self-contempt, "for all that, if he comes to-morrow——"

She turned away feverishly, desperately.

"What can I do?" she cried to herself. Then all at once she saw.

* * * * *

"I wonder if he has quite forgiven me," she thought. "It is three years now."

Three years before, Durant, hurrying through his bohemian breakfast at the studio, had been interrupted by a knock at the door. Opening it he found himself confronted by James, the Heatherton's servant, who, with a comprehending friendly grin, held out to Durant a small envelope. With a deadly misgiving Durant seized it, tore it open, and read:

My Dear Esmond,—You surprised me in a moment of weakness last night. Perhaps you might surprise me in another to-day so I have made it impossible. Hate me if you must; forgive me if you can. I have gone away for a little time, not to return until I hear that you have left for Europe with Herdsman or by yourself. Forgive me for withholding my address. A note to Uncle John will always reach me. It will be useless to try to shake my decision this time; even if you did so for a moment I should not abide by it.

Forgive me, Esmond—forgive me.

Faithfully and lovingly,
Marguerite Heatherton.

It was three years since Durant stood in his little studio, a broked-hearted man, in the bitterness of his spirit reviling his art, his fate, the day he first met and loved this fairest, most heartless woman.

And it was three years since he had sailed away with Herdsman for England, bearing with him all his little store of valued treasures, the Sappho, and the sorest heart, he told himself, that ever beat in any human breast.

He had left without any word in answer to her, had vowed he would never write to her again; but the many days and nights upon the calm, infinite seas exercised a potent influence upon his mood.

Day by day he stood by the steamer's side and watched the receding leagues of ocean grow between himself and Marguerite, and his longing, bitterly wounded heart yearned towards her. With every league it was less and less easy to picture her the heartless, cold, ambitious creature he was fain to think her. More and more, love, the infinite forgiver, made excuses for her.

When he reached England, as a matter of course he wrote, pouring out his whole soul in a torrent of tenderness, reproach, entreaty, unavailing regret.

And she replied at once, retracting nothing, conceding nothing; quietly reminding him of what she had said, that there were to be no love-letters, that they were but friends—best friends—all with such a loving gentleness as reduced Durant to despair.

Then he took refuge in proud silence, and for months he sent no word. But she wrote on, long friendly, intimate, most unimpassioned letters, ignoring utterly his silence, always full of his plans and work, her interest in his success, the latest art gossip—letters upon which he dwelt with an intensity he himself never realised. He never dreamed what a mighty part those constant messengers played in his life just then; from what abysses of despondency they kept him.

At last he too sat down and wrote a friendly letter, telling her of his work, his plans, of how agreeably he was surprised in England, how cordial he had found the English artists, etc.

"Not a word in it she can find fault with this time," he said to himself, with a last throb of bitterness, as he folded and sealed it.

Meanwhile he was, in spite of himself, becoming interested: in spite of himself becoming happier in his work. The constant stimulus of artistic surroundings, the society of other artists, the generous appreciation which his first exhibited work met with, the atmosphere of emulation and friendly recognition—all told upon his sensitive and receptive nature. He began to plan more largely and to attack his art more daringly.

His little studio became the centre of a coterie of brother artists, who watched with an enthusiastic and most unenvious delight the development of his genius. Durant throve like a flower in this genial environment, and began to do great things.

"Lilith has brought me quite a meed of fortune," he wrote Marguerite. "She is the sensation of the hour, and has received the honour of a protective railing at the Royal Academy. I wish you could see her, for I am not ashamed of her; but I shall do better yet than 'Lilith.' Fortune follows but slowly. In fact I don't mind owning that I've had some pretty hard rubs to make both ends meet; but things begin to look brighter, too, in this regard. Another success like 'Lilith' and I am made."

"Lilith" and "Lilith's" praises overran the papers. Whole columns were given up to her; her name became a current word on the lips of fashionable and artistic Melbourne, proud of its claim to the young painter. Hood, the great artist, from whose age-enfeebled hand the brush was almost ready to fall, rejoiced in the prospect of a successor in whom the hope and glory of the Young World might centre.

"Glorious!" said he to Marguerite. "Have you heard what Durant is doing? There's a man who will uphold the honour of our young nation everywhere; who will be a glory to us all. And do you know," he added, as though conscience-stricken, "I decried him, foretold his failure! Here in these very rooms I said he would never amount to anything, that he lacked the elements of greatness. *I* said so!"

"Yes," said Marguerite; "I remember."

"At the same time," declared the master energetically, "it was true then. I never mistake. If he had gone on as he was, he would have failed as I foretold, for he had neither ambition nor energy. Something, something happened at the critical moment. Depend upon it, it was so. Well, whatever it was, it was heaven-sent. Art will be the richer for it."

He looked at Marguerite, and she at him; and all at once—who can tell how?—a great many things which had been puzzling the old man were made clear to him.

And Marguerite stood beneath the Holbein.

"I am so glad, so glad," she thought. "But he will do nobler work than 'Lilith' by and by."

And the friendly letters flew back and forth—long and confidential; but there was not, Marguerite remarked gratefully, even with a little hunger at her heart, there was not a word she could criticise in his. She did full honour to the self-control and the respect he showed to her wishes, at a cost which she had no difficulty in estimating.

In the spring her uncle died, and Marguerite was left alone.

"Come to me, my poor, dear child, *at once*," wrote her uncle's sister, from England. "My heart aches to think of you *alone*. You say John has amply provided for you;

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but what can a young, homeless, unchaperoned heiress do? My house and arms are open to you. Make up your mind to pack up at once and take the next steamer. I am all impatience to see you," etc.

"No," said Marguerite to herself; "I will not go until he asks me. I will wait a little."

Durant wrote at once, kindly, sympathizingly, on receipt of the news. He was still struggling along, already recognised as a rising genius, but hardly reaping the first golden fruits of his success.

"He is proud and ambitious," thought Marguerite. "Will he let my fortune keep us apart?" And the impulse came to go to him, to say: "You have done all I wished; you will be great. Let me help you a little now with my fortune. Let me come to you now." Then she thought again. "No; he is on the brink of fortune already. I exacted so much then. Let him taste the full delight now. Let him come to me as a prince, giving all, receiving only myself. He will be happier so. I must wait."

But month after month went, and it was three years in all, and she held his letter in her hand. It said so much—so much and so little. It told her of his great work, with which he hoped to seal his fame, to win his ultimate crown.

"I want you to see my Madonna," he wrote. "She is orthodox in nothing but name, I assure you. You remember all our talks on the subject. If you should see her you will see how much she owes to them—and you." Then he said: "If this brings me the fame I hope for, I shall come home in the spring for a little while." And under her hand lay the paper, telling in its latest, telegraphic despatches, of the triumphant success which had hailed the exhibition of the great Madonna, and covered with imperishable laurels the name of the young artist—Durant.

All Europe was ringing with it, and here stood the woman who loved him, trembling like a reed.

"He has waited for this," she said to herself. "Now he will come."

And then she took a brave resolve. She would not wait. Nobly had he won all she had to give, Well, she would give it nobly. She would go to him, bravely, purely, and, keeping back nothing of the passion of her heart, she would lay it at his feet, with a pride which never woman felt who stooped to lift a lover up.

* * * * * *

"My dear child, I can hardly believe it is really you! How like your dear mother you are—only you are taller and more imposing. And you are not tired? That is a special Providence: for, I almost feared to tell you, my dear, we are to have a little gathering here this evening—musical and artistic; very quiet, of course.

"I was afraid you would not feel like coming down, and that would have been a pity, for, my dear, I've such a surprise for you. Mr. Durant has haunted the house since I told him I had your telegram, and he was determined to meet you, only he was telegraphed for at noon—some royal command—and he had to go. He was quite frantic about it, but he will be here to-night, and he has sent a perfect garden of flowers. They are in your room. And what else do you suppose he has sent? My child, it is enough to turn my head with excitement just to think of having it under my roof, when all the dignitaries in London would give their eyes for it—the Madonna! He insisted upon having it brought here and hung just that you might see it at once. He said it was his welcome. And he superintended the hanging; would have it just so. He was welcome to do what he liked, you may be sure. I was only too grateful. I don't suppose there is another woman on earth short of her Majesty, he would have done it for."

"Ah! what flowers!"

She stopped.

The room was like a bower with roses—great masses of roses, red and gold and creamy white—set everywhere.

"Mr. Durant sent them," said her aunt. "These, he said, were to go on your dressing-table, for you were particularly fond of them,"

"These," were a great bowl of Parma violets, purple and dewy and fragrant, whose sweetness arose like incense to greet the girl.

"And now," said Aunt Emily, "that is all, I believe. Well dear, I will leave you to rest. Ring, if you want Hornells, and remember that you are really at home."

The door closed behind her.

And Marguerite, alone, knelt down and put her arms about the bowl of violets and bent her pale face lower and lower, till eyes and lips were hidden in the petals utterly.

"Can it be possible that is I?" she exclaimed to herself a few hours later when she stood before the glass. "Do I look like—that?" with a little ineffable thrill of joy.

She was so fair in all that soft black lace—so he liked best to see her. Last of all, with unsteady fingers, she took a handful of the violets and fastened them in her bosom. Then she looked at herself. Such happy eyes! Such a soft glow upon those cheeks! Such tell-tale, tremulous lips!

"And he called you cold," she said, to that glowing image. "He—he will not call you so now," and she hid her warm face in her hands.

"Yes; what is it?" with a start. "I will be down in a moment." "It has come," she thought.

Down the great stairs, across the lighted hall, she walked, as if in a dream. At the drawing room door of the long suite she hesitated, only a second, for, before she had time to think, her hands were seized in two strong, gentle ones, and she was drawn irresistibly across the threshold.

"Marguerite! dear Marguerite! Is it really you? I can scarcely believe it. Come into the light that I may see if you are yourself."

Esmond's voice, just the dear voice of old, only laughing now, and bright with excitement. She lifted

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her famished eyes. His face, the beautiful face, thinner a trifle, older, more manly, changed, "all for the better," she thought, in that one lightning, loving glance.

"And you," he went on gaily, "you are lovelier than ever. Were you always so tall? What it is to see you once more, Marguerite!"

Could tones be more affectionately tender, eyes more overflowingly delighted, clasp of hands more warm?

She lifted her eyes to his bravely.

"And I," she said, "I am glad to see you, Esmond."

"How good it is to hear your voice again!" he exclaimed. "You are not a bit changed, after all. To think," he ran on, with a sudden change of tone, "that I was not there to meet you! I made myself disagreeable in consequence, I can tell you, to all their high-mightinesses. At least you got my flowers. How good of you to wear them!" he added, touching lightly the knot of violets. "For 'auld lang syne,' Marguerite; you were so fond of them in the old days."

She looked at him silently.

"I know," he continued, smiling, "I am not giving you a chance to speak; but if you knew! It is such a joy to see you. Ah!"—he turned to her with a sudden, eager start—"have they shown you my Madonna yet?"

"No," she said, "I—waited."

He gave her a quick, grateful glance.

"Thank you," he said. "It has been a dream of mine to show her to you. Let us go now, before the people come."

He led the way, talking all the while with so much buoyancy, so much life and freshness, throughout the entire suite of rooms to a small half-lit study at the end of all. And Marguerite followed. At the door of the little room Durant stopped. Opposite it hung a great frame with a heavy curtain drawn across it.

"Stay where you are," said Durant, over his shoulder. "It wants distance, and I want to see your face."

He went up to the great frame. He himself was a little pale, and Marguerite was white.

"Are you ready?" he asked, and he drew the curtain slowly away.

There she stood, the great Madonna, the majestic Madonna, like to no other Madonna the world has ever seen. No virgin, but a sublime mother, the type and image of the world's ideal—strong, and calm, and divinely human—and in her arms she held the hope and promise of the ages.

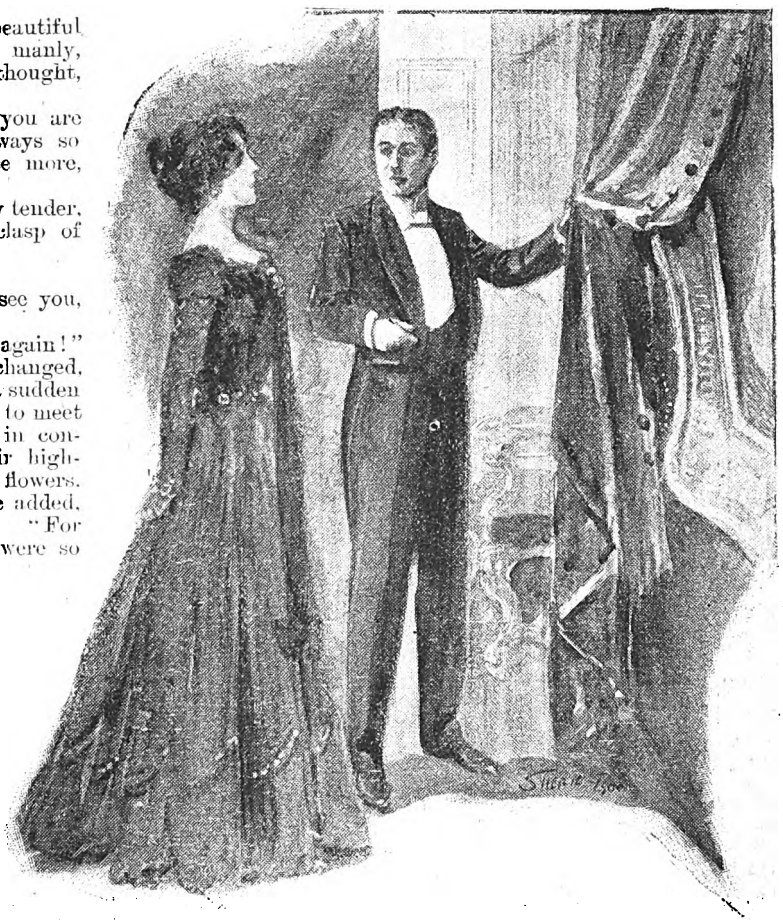
"You see," said Durant quietly, "I have made her simply—a woman."

He waited a moment silently, and then crossed the room, and stood looking down at Marguerite with a grave and gentle gaze.

"Are you content?" he said. "Does she satisfy your severe and noble standards?"

"Yes," said Marguerite, "I am content."

"Then," said Esmond, "one of the dreams of my life is fulfilled. But there is something more. Marguerite,



"Are you ready?" he asked, and he drew the curtain slowly away.

under this picture, of which you have been the largest inspiration, let me ask your forgiveness for all the suffering I have caused you. I was selfish, ill-controlled.

"I—I despise myself when I think of it. Believe me, I have lived to rejoice that you did not return that ignoble passion of mine, to value your sweet friendship, to bless you for your beautiful tenderness and patience, and, not least of all, to thank you for the bitter but most needed lesson. It has largely made me what I am, for I was resolved to prove that you had not done me justice. Admit," he said with a smile full of tenderness, "that I am not quite the worthless good-for-nothing you then thought me, and, dearest friend, sister, forgive me all, and love me a little."

There was a silence. Then she looked at him with a look he could not fathom.

"I have nothing to forgive, Esmond," she said quietly, "nothing."

He took her hand and kissed it.

"Will you give me one violet?" he asked, "just one, as a sign of friendship and perfect understanding?"

She took a violet from her bosom and held it out to him and smiled a little.

"Here," she said, "is the sign of friendship and perfect understanding."

She fixed her eyes upon him with a strange expression.

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"And now," she said, "is there nothing more? You—you are a very happy man, Esmond. You are young, rich, powerful; you have a divine gift. There is only one thing more a friend could wish you."

She watched him, how intently.

Durant's face glowed.

"Ah!" he said, "I saved that till last. I was about to tell you—and it is yet a profound secret."

"So!" she interrupted him. "I am rejoiced—beyond words."

"You are the first to know it," he said, with vibrating tones of happiness.

She unfastened the little knot of violets from her bosom, and laid it in the shadow underneath the picture.

"Thanks for that, too," she added, gently. "What is—her name, Esmond?"

He gave her name.

"She will be here to-night," he said. "She knows you already—knows all, Marguerite: but I want you to know her. May I bring her to you?"

"Yes," said Marguerite, "bring her to me."

"How am I ever to deserve so much good fortune," began Esmond, with grateful eyes.

There was a sharp ring at the bell.

"Let us go," said Marguerite, rising quickly. "Let us go. It may be she has come."

"Your niece is a very lovely woman," said one of the best judges in London to Mrs. Bretherton an hour later. "Surely I have seen her somewhere before—her face——"

"Not unless you have been to Melbourne," replied the hostess. "This is her first appearance here."

"Pardon me," said the same gentleman, later in the evening, to Marguerite, "but do you happen to know Durant the painter?"

Marguerite looked at him over her fan.

"Mr. Durant and I are old friends," she said.

"Ah, that explains it; you have a look of the Madonna. Pardon my remarking what all London will not fail to do," he added with a smile.

She bowed a little coldly.

"Any woman must feel honoured by the resemblance," she said. "Excuse me."

She passed on into the little room where the Madonna hung deserted.

* * * * *

"I thought I should find you here," said Esmond. "I have brought Olga."

Marguerite turned to the tiny, childlike, graceful figure at his side.

"A mistake, all a mistake," she said to herself. "She will not help him."

"And now," said Esmond happily, looking from one to the other, "you two are to love each other dearly. I know you will. And I am the proudest and happiest man on earth to stand beside you both—the two people dearest to me in the world."

Marguerite returned gently the look he gave her, so warmly, tenderly affectionate. She dropped her eyes *not* to see that other look he turned upon his betrothed.

When she raised them she found herself, with a shock of amazement, gazing straight into two glorious eyes, set in that childlike face. From their depths a strong and fearless soul looked out. "Thank God!" thought Marguerite, "all will be well with him."

Recalling herself she put out her hand.

"I was about," she said, "to commit the worst of solecisms. Mr. Durant is so old and dear a friend that I thought the woman he would marry I might dare to congratulate; but now," with a sweet fleeting smile, "I shall know that if she is fortunate, he has been more than fortunate."

The beautiful eyes contemplated her gravely.

"Thank you," said their owner, simply. Then turning to her lover, "Esmond," she said, with a certain dainty coolness, "there is a great, fat novelist in the other room—one of the greatest you ever saw, Esmond—and he wants to know me. Take me to him, if you please."

Durant laughingly gave her his arm, and Marguerite blessed their going. She did not dream that eyes as clear as her own had read her secret, and that a soul as noble had quietly taken as a trust into its keeping the honour and greatness of the man beside her.

She looked up, and the Madonna looked down at her with eyes of strength and lips of infinite compassion.

"And he will never know," thought Marguerite, with unutterable bitterness. "He will never know."

She unfastened the little knot of violets from her bosom and laid it in the shadow underneath the picture, and again lifted up her face exultingly, for love is strong.

And then—and then she let it fall again upon her hands, and the large, slow tears dropped one by one between the fingers, for hearts are weak.

Elsie Fitsham.

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HOW HE WON HER.

"It was in the year 1850," began the old Canadian, "that I came to Montreal and became employed in a hardware store in Wolfe Street. I became acquainted with a widow lady, who kept a few boarders in what was then known as Esmond Avenue.

"My landlady was accomplished and had evidently seen better days, but the death of her husband left her in reduced circumstances. She had two daughters, both lively, intelligent, and possessed of graces that only come from association with the better class of society. They were of extremely gay disposition, and I had not been at the house a month before I was hopelessly in love with Fanny, the elder of the two, and though at times her manner towards me was tender and encouraging, she carefully avoided giving me an opportunity to be alone with her long enough to declare my passion.

"The winter had nearly passed, without finding me any farther advanced in my suit, until one night in February, after a heavy fall of snow, I asked Fanny to take a sleigh ride with me, to which she consented, and after tea I procured as high stepping a pair of horses as could be found in the city, drove up to the house of my affinity, and in a few minutes we were whirling away out on the Sherbrooke turnpike.

"I had taken that road because it was less frequented at night than the other thoroughfares leading from the city, and we were not likely to be interrupted in our ride or conversation. The night was just cool enough to make it necessary to place my arm round my companion, the horses were frisky, and the moon shone with that peculiar light which is preferred by lovers to all others, unless it be that of a gas jet turned down so low that as an illuminator it is nearly useless.

"Through the outskirts of the town we whirled out into the country, where the lights from the farmhouses became more scattered, and the baying of a watchdog was the only sound heard. Fanny, who had previously sung, laughed and chatted merrily during our ride, now became quiet.

"As we came to a rise in the road that disclosed a level strip of two or three miles in length before us I said to myself, 'Before we turn I will settle my fate and go home a happier or more miserable man.'

"Hardly had I come to this conclusion before I heard a peculiar rushing sound behind us, and looking round could see a flock of sheep coming at full speed towards us. Behind them were two or three dogs, and these accounted for the fright of the sheep, which would doubtless run for miles before stopping and cause their owner much trouble in hunting them up. But a bright thought came to me.

"Fanny was a town-bred girl and had never seen a sheep save in the shape of cutlets or roast at her mother's table. I would engage in a strategy of the kind which is considered fair in love or war. Lowering my voice to a suitable tone, I said:

"'Fanny, my girl, are you brave—can you bear terrible news?'

"'Why, Henry, what is the matter—what makes you so pale?'

"Assuming a more tragic voice I replied:

"'Be firm, dearest—rely on me. We are followed by wolves! Look behind you and you can see the monsters, who are already thirsting for our blood!'

"She gave a hurried glance backward, heard the rushing sound of many feet, the deep breathing, which, when heard in the forests of the north, causes the wildest dismay, then drawing nearer to me said. 'I did not know there were any wolves so near the city, Henry.'

"'Neither did I think there were any,' I replied, 'but it seems we are mistaken, for these behind us are of the grey species and by far the most dangerous of any. They must have been driven here by hunger, and, unless our horses can reach the inn about four miles from here before we are overtaken, we are lost.'

"At this juncture the old curly horned leader, tired and out of wind from the long run, gave vent to a prolonged bleat which was fearful enough to scare a girl less timid than Fanny. I sawed on the horses' bits, and flourished my whip frantically round them until they were excited and apparently doing their best to escape the fate behind them, but I was secretly holding them back to allow the wolves (?) to get closer.

"On came the motley horde, panting for breath, nearer and nearer, until I began to throw out robes and blankets. 'These will keep them chewing a few minutes,' I said, 'and we may escape.' But the sheep had no appetite for the robes and were close behind us.

"I arose in the sleigh, gave the reins to Fanny, saying, 'Drive for your life—I will sacrifice myself for you!' and made a movement as if to jump out of the sleigh.

"'Never! Never!' she screamed. 'We will die together?' And she pulled me down beside her to await her fate.

"While thus employed I hurriedly declared my love and succeeded in obtaining a hasty avowal from Fanny; at the same time I was holding back the horses to let the pursuers go by. They came; the monsters separated and passed us on the other side, while I held my hat over her face that she might not see the dreadful deception I had played upon her.

"She fainted the moment we were overtaken by the wolves, and, without trying to revive her, I turned the horses homeward, and only stopped to pick up the robes which had been thrown out to check the ferocious animals. After driving a mile or two my now affianced wife revived sufficiently to hear how we were saved by a party of sleigh riders who met us just as we were surrounded.

"Though nervous and weak from the excitement, she recovered her buoyancy of spirits before we arrived home and had promised to keep our adventure a secret, as I informed her the owner of the horses would charge me a fearful price if he knew to what tests his steeds had been put. And that is my adventure with wolves and how I came to marry."

"But did your wife never find out the deception you practised?" we asked the old Canadian as he laughed again while thinking of his boyish prank.

"No until eight years ago," he replied, "when I told her one evening while she was ironing."

"What did she say?"

"Not much—not very much," answered our old romancer, but, removing his hat, he showed us a triangular space upon his head, such as might have been made by a hot polishing iron, and with not a hair upon its surface.

We thought Fanny was revenged. W. F. G.

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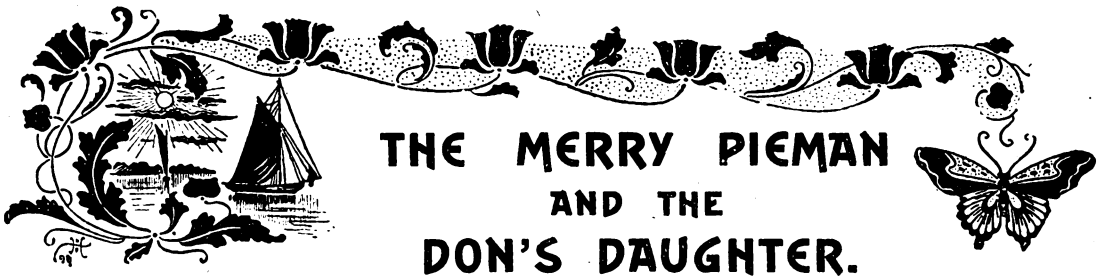

THE MERRY PIEMAN AND THE DON'S DAUGHTER.

MANY years ago, upon the banks of a gleaming river that rippled through the dreary heart of Old Castile, there stood a castle with many towers, in which dwelt a haughty Don and his only daughter, Francella Dolores.

The Don had a nose like an eagle's beak and an eye like a red flash of fire in the dark, and he was very fierce and proud, for the blood of eleven generations of noble ancestors throbbed in his veins.

Francella was a sweet, shy girl, with eyes like those of the wild deer. She was graceful and fair as a wild flower in spring; and so wildly enamoured of her loveliness were all the youths and bachelors in that province that they one and all forsook their comfortable haciendas, gave up napping after dinner, and wandered about the country doing all sorts of ridiculous and daring things in the hope of winning her favour.

Francella, however, was wholly unmoved by all these wondrous doings, as she had for some time been deeply in love with a gay young pastry vendor whom she had seen selling pies in the market place one morning, clad in a bright blue and yellow jacket, and singing like a skylark all the while. His name was Pedro Perez, but every one called him the Merry Pieman.

To a maiden who loved as passionately as Francella, there was very little satisfaction in peeping through the lattice of her window at daybreak every morning, as she did, merely to see the object of her affection passing by with his basket of wares, and humming some merry tune. But the memory of even that little glimpse filled her dreams the whole day long, just as one sees green and scarlet circles, everywhere after looking at the sun.

One morning, however, as he passed with his basket full of tarts, whistling a scrap of a rollicking bolero, he chanced to look up and spied her peeping from the window.

The instant he saw her he stopped stock still and his whistle ran off to nowhere in a funny little squeak. The blood rushed to Francella's cheeks and she was about to draw the curtain, when he doffed his cap with a graceful bow, stooped swiftly as he did so, and, choosing the crispiest custard pastry in his basket, tossed it up towards the window.

"Oh, my!" she gasped. "Oh, my, it will spill!"

But the pastry sailed through the air like a swallow on the wing, turned over twice as it flew, and dropped on the window-sill unharmed with an appetising little flop that made Francella's heart go pit-a-pat. Speechless with delight, she clasped her slender hands and stood gazing in rapture at the fat little pats of currant jelly dotting the fluffy white meringue.

The young pastry vendor thought he had never looked upon a lovelier picture in all his life.

"Senorita Francella Dolores," he exclaimed, pressing his hand to his heart:

"You're the cake of my endeavour and my jelly roll forever;
You're my tapioca tartlet and my lemon custard pie;
You're my candied fruit and spices and my juicy citron slices;
You're the darling sugar-sprinkled apple dumpling of my eye!"

Francella's heart fluttered like a bird in a cage. "Truly," said she, as she set her small white teeth deep into the rim of the fragrant pastry with a fascinating crackle of the rich crust, "truly you are the most delightful lover I ever had. But tell me," she said tremulously, "is this pastry a vanilla-cream pastry or a lemon-custard? I can scarcely tell, I am so agitated—but if it is lemon custard you might toss me up two or three, for I just dote on lemon custard."

The words were hardly out of her mouth before a heavy foot-step, hurrying up the hollow stair, echoed down the long corridor. She turned deathly pale.

"Fly!" she cried, trembling from head to foot with apprehension; "it is my father. The smell of the pastry has betrayed us!"

For an instant she stood swaying like a pallid lily in the wind, as the crimson sash of the pastry vendor faded swiftly from the view, and she could not restrain a sob as she saw pies and tarts fall here and there and break in fragments on the stones.

"Open the door, Francella," cried her father, in a terrible voice, beating upon the oaken panels with angry fists.

"Yes, father," faltered Francella, hastily finishing the pastry, though her hands shook with terror.

"Don't say 'yes,'" roared the furious Don. "But open the door instantly—I smell a smell of pastry!"

"A pieman passed a moment ago," stammered Francella.

"Girl," thundered the Don, "do not try to deceive me! I tell you I smell pastry, pastry; vulgar, hand-made lemon pastry, through the keyhole of the door!"

Francella, white with fear, pushed back the bolt, and her father strode into the room.

There on the window-ledge lay three flakes of pie-crust.

"Francella," cried her father, in a voice so icy cold that she shivered. "Francella, is it possible that you, a daughter of mine, have so far forgotten your rank as to eat pie, a common pie?"

Francella clung speechless to the curtain

"A daughter of mine should die before she would stoop to the pie of a low-born pastry vendor!"

"But, father," panted Francella, "I love him."

"What?" roared the Don. "A pie-seller?" and without another word he locked her up in the dungeon.

Then in a towering rage he sent out heralds through

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all the land, to proclaim in every courtyard, market-place and *plaza* that upon the following Monday he would hold a tournament at his castlé, open to all high-born *caballeros*, and t the victor in the strife would give his only daughte .e far-famed Francella Dolores, the Lily of Castile.

There had not been such another out-pouring of the chivalry of Spain since the days of the great crusade. From east, from west, from north and south they came. From the wild mountain passes of Castile, from the cross-road castles of Grenada and from the furthest limits of Navarre. Knights and squires, dukes, hidalgos, nobles and princes of the royal line, armour-clad with pennoned lances, fluttering plumes and splendid trappings, until the lanes and highways looked like one grand circus procession of sun-bright riders flaming in the glory of the midsummer sun.

And when the great day dawned the plain about the castle of the Don was hidden by a multitude of tents, marquees and pavilions of radiant colours, over which flapped and swung the banners of the best blood of Spain.

The trumpet blared from the Castle walls. Down clanged the drawbridge, and the haughty Don rode forth, his retinue about him, and at his right hand Francella Dolores, ashy pale, clad in white samite and cloth of gold and mounted upon a cream-white palfrey that her father had hired for the occasion of the best livery stable in Toledo.

A cheer of greeting rolled across the plain and thundered away in the canyons of the mountain, scaring the sheep nearly out of their skins; but Francella hung her head upon her breast like a wilted flower, unmindful of it all.

Up the glittering lists rode the Don to the bar of the high pavilion.

"Begin!" he cried, and waved his hand.

With a tremendous shout, the mail-clad warriors hurled together like mad wild boars.

Crash! went ashen spears, splintered in fragments that kept the poor in kindling-wood for a month.

Clang, clang, rang sword and battle-axe on helmet, mail and shield. Down went horse and rider in a cloud of blinding dust.

Round and round went the struggling, seething whirl, battling like tigers, while from the great pavilion rose shout and call to friend and foe:

"Go it, Gasper—now you've got him again!"

"Wade in, Carlos—hit him again!"

"Now, Diego—yah, yah, yah!" until the sky rang.

Many an unintentional somersault was turned in that wild onfall, and many a gallant knight was tumbled over his horse's crupper, like an apple from a tree.

But still the fight went on with unabated fury all day long, without an intermission for refreshments; though here and there at intervals, from under the mad medley of hilts and heels, some dishevelled *caballero* crawled on his hands and knees and telephoned for the ambulance.

But when at last the night fell, and over the mountains in the east the old moon hung like a tired cheese, the Don arose.

"Hold!" he cried. "The day is spent. Let us eat, drink and be merry, and sleep anon, and on the morrow the tourney may proceed."

Then followed a scene that baffles description.

The Don had mortgaged his whole estate to raise the ready cash, and "Get me the best cook in all Castile," he said.

"He shall be gotten," bowed the steward.

"And the richest stores in all the land!"

"They shall be procured."

And there upon the great tables spread in the long pavilion steamed and glowed a feast that filled the air for miles around with appetizing fragrance that was in itself almost a meal, and made the mouths of those noble warriors water like mountain springs.

Roasted capons, stuffed with spice and olives; flitches of beef, garnished with savoury and lined with currant jelly; broad gammons of sizzling bacon, crisped with onions and grated almonds; fat eels, stewed in rich, green oil; sausages buried in golden cheesecakes; roast lamb with clear mint sauce; venison collops with guava jam; turbot, herring, sturgeon, roe, turtle soup and devilled kidneys drowned in wine.

But in the night a woeful sound arose within the camp. There was busking and buckling in haste, and riding hard through the darkness, and wild blows and voices crying at the doors of all the doctors and apothecaries in the town.

And when the morning came the camp wore a melancholy, jaded air. Down hung the proud banners wearily, and slow flapped the tent doors dejectedly in the sullen wind, and there was a prevalent odour of peppermint and paregoric everywhere.

Again the trumpet blared from the castle wall, and the draw-bridge rattled down; and again the retinue of the Don and his daughter swept down the lists. But the lists were empty, and in the whole camp there was no sound, nor any person to be seen, save one doleful fellow with a plaster on his nose and a bit of raw beef clapped to a very dismal eye.

And while they wondered, there came from afar off a solitary horseman, riding down the mountain side. Spurring across the plain, he came up the lists in a cloud of dust and smote upon the shield of Don Santallana Lopez, Duke of Tors, with a blow that made the audience jump an inch off their seats.

"I challenge him to combat!" cried the stranger in a ringing voice, at the sound of which Francella started and clasped her hands.

Then the dust cleared away. There upon a fat little donkey sat a stout young fellow in a gabardine of blue and gold, wearing a white apron tied about his waist. In his hand he bore a broad, strong baker's paddle of ash, from which fluttered a banderole, and upon this banderole, on a blue ground, were blazoned a silver lily and three custard pies rampant. His face was hidden by a mask.

"Out with your Duke," cried he impatiently. "I can't wait here all day."

Then the Marshal ran to the Duke's pavilion, crying: "Señor, señor, they are calling thee in the lists!"

"Let 'em call, you noisy dog," bawled the Duke with his head in a bucket of ice-water. "I wouldn't fight, the way I feel, for a billion Lillies of Castile—my head is like to split!" and he groaned dismally. "Oh, that supper."

Then the stranger rode again down the lists and struck the shield of the Baron of Baquedena until it rang like a Chinese gong. But the Baron came not. And the Marshal ran to the Baron's tent and beat upon the sill-board, calling: "Señor, señor, they call thee in the lists!"

"Plague on the lists!" groaned the Baron, who was rubbing his forehead with spirits of camphor, and wore a mustard plaster where it would do the most good. "Plague on the lists and on you, too! My head spins

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round like a flying Dutchman. I wouldn't fight for the fairest maiden in forty Spains!" And "Oh, that supper, that supper!" he groaned in bitterness of spirit.

Then the stranger smiled a strange, far-away smile, and smote upon the shield of all the knights within that camp, but not one came forth; for some were groaning and some were praying, while others were swearing dreadfully; and some threw their boots at the Marshal's head, and some tied themselves up in piteous knots and wailed for the doctor, and the burden of their wailings was: "That supper; oh, that supper."

At last they came to the Marquis of Seville; and he, being an old campaigner and a veteran glutton, had but an attack of dyspepsia that filled him with a yearning to fight a cage of wild cats for pastime. He summoned his two private blacksmiths, who got him into his fighting clothes; and then, with his ponderous lance in rest, he thundered down the lists, grinding his teeth until the shivers ran up and down his own back.

"Who art thou," he roared, hoarsely, "who darest me to joust!"

"Come and find out," replied the stranger, sweetly, as he took a good grip on his long ashen paddle.

The Marquis put spurs to his fiery steed and dashed upon the stranger like a thunderbolt.

Francella shrieked and hid her eyes.

But the stranger laughed, dug his heels into his donkey's ribs, dodged like a flash, ducked under the great beam of the Marquis's lance, and, swinging his paddle in the air till it whizzed again, he spanked the Marquis's fiery steed across the flank with such a vigour that the said fiery steed gave one tremendous plunge and such a wild kick of his hind legs in the air that the Marquis went heels over head in the dirt, where he lay with his head going round so fast that he did not know which direction was up.

Then the stranger rode around and poked him gently in the ribs and asked softly: "Fair sir, would you be pleased to have some more of this pleasing game?"

But the Marquis rolled over on his face and crawled away on his hands and knees as fast as he could, evidently labouring under the impression that there had been an earthquake and that the mountains in the vicinity were turning handsprings at his expense.

Then the stranger, turning to the great pavilion, cried: "Sir Don, if you have any other able-bodied victims to a delusion that they are the only people on earth, please bring them along!"

There was a dead silence.

"There don't seem to be any," said he, ironically.

"No," replied the Don, looking carefully over the programme and then about the camp in some chagrin, "there doesn't."

"Then," said the stranger, "it appears that I am the victor in this tournament, and the winner of the fair Francella Dolores."

"I don't know," said the Don, looking doubtfully at the donkey and the baker's paddle, "I have never seen anything like this laid down in the books of chivalric etiquette, and it doesn't seem quite, that is, not exactly —er—proper, you know."

"Nonsense," cried the stranger. "You know as well as I, Sir Don, that, 'All is fair in love and war.'"

"Yes," said the Don, dubiously, "but this isn't war."

"It is love though," cried the stranger, at which Francella giggled hysterically. "And you can see for yourself that love is given the first place in the proverb."

"Yes," rejoined the Don, reluctantly. "But before we begin talking of love or of giving you my daughter, who are you?"

"I," cried the stranger in a ringing voice, snatching off his mask as he spoke, "am—Pedro Perez!"

"What?" roared the Don, leaping to his feet, crimson with fury, and drawing his sword half out of its sheath. "A base-born pie seller?"

"Base-born?" cried Pedro, stoutly. "No, Sir Don—my family is as old as yours and my ancestry as good."

"What?" cried the Don—"what," being a favourite word of his—"do you dare to compare your lineage with mine?"

"Well, I should say I did!" replied Pedro, coolly. "I am a direct descendant of Adam and Eve. Does your family line run any further back than that or begin any higher?"

The Don's sword dropped back into its sheath with a clank. He bit his lips.

"No," said he, sourly, "I can't say that it does. But," he went on, sneeringly, "if you are well born, Sir Piepeddler, where are your estates?"

"I have none," answered Pedro, "but——"

"Nonsense! Be off, you beggar, you penniless fraud, or I'll——"

"Not so fast, Sir Don," cried Pedro, quietly. "I may have no estates of my own, but I am no beggar, nor am I penniless. I hold——"

"Hold? I don't care what you hold!"

"Don't be too sure of that, Sir Don," said Pedro once more, "for what I hold happens to be a mortgage upon your castle and your lands!"

The Don dropped into his chair as if some one had knocked his legs out from under him. "How—how"—he gasped, "how did you get it?"

"I was the cook who furnished your supper, last night—and the mortgage was my pay!"

The Don collapsed.

"And now, my dear Don," said Pedro, affably, cocking one leg across the pommel of his saddle and locking his hands about his knee, "if you prefer, you may keep your daughter, in spite of the fact that I love her and she loves me, and—I will foreclose the mortgage to-morrow morning."

"Oh, my dear fellow," cried the Don, changing expression like a kaleidoscope, "I was just joking, indeed I was. Francella is yours—take her, take her, my boy—and may you be happy!"

With a glad cry Pedro leaped from his donkey's back and sprang to Francella's side.

"Oh, my!" she gasped, ecstatically. "Oh, my! Now I can have all the lemon-custard pastry that I want!"

And as Pedro continued to hold the mortgage they lived happily forever after. C. Harvey.

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The Punched Kopeck.

"THE annals of the Russian police, if they could be read, would excel the most extravagant imaginings of your detective story writers," said a handsome, heavily whiskered man, who was one of a party of five gentlemen in a small room in a St. Petersburg private palace. "We have excellent writers of fiction here in Russia,"—two of his auditors were Frenchmen—"and sometimes they go to the real for material, but I am sure that the shrewdest of them have never heard of the punched kopeck which belongs to the annals of the police just mentioned."

The man with the whiskers emptied his wine glass and pushed it away as he continued:

"About fifteen years ago, Count Yasilvitch was one of the best-known nobles of the Empire. His St. Petersburg establishment was conducted on a style of royal magnificence, and he had the imperial ear oftener than any other man of his rank.

"Well, one morning the count was found dead in his mansion, and in circumstances which went to prove that somebody helped him out of the world. As a matter of course, the Russian police took the affair in hand; and that was the last heard of it.

"At that time there was said to be attached to the Third Section a man named Paritz. Rumour invested him with all the attributes of the ideal 'sleuth.' Nobody could be found who had ever seen him, but, all the same, the great discoveries in crime continued to be placed to his credit. He worked out great results from impossible beginnings, and some said that it was Paritz who was adding most to the criminal population of Siberia. Of course everyone expected to see Count Yasilvitch's enemy dragged to light through the agency of this secret man-hound, but as months passed without anything of the kind transpiring Paritz became the laughing stock of St. Petersburg.

"Count Yasilvitch was known far and wide as a numismatist. His collection of coins was the most complete of any in the country, and had drawn from the mint large offers of purchase. In the collection were two ordinary copper kopecks which had been curiously punched through the centre. Count Yasilvitch valued these coins above any in his possession, and it was understood that they had a history which he would not reveal.

"When the police came to examine the count's coin collection after his death they discovered that a number of pieces were missing, and among them was one of the kopecks. Of course the authorities did not care to publish their discovery, and the world at large knew nothing about it. The coin which was not taken was given to the misty Paritz, with orders to find its mate and the count's enemy as well.

"Paritz took the case with his usual bow, and there the Chief of Police left it. The count's coins were put up for sale, and the numismatists who were drawn to St. Petersburg by the event wondered what had become of the punched kopecks. Time rolled on, and everybody forgot Paritz and his trail.

"I recollect that I took considerable interest in the trail of the kopeck at the time. I was rather intimate with a member of the police, and he told me much about the count's death and the hunt for his murderer. But question him as adroitly as I would, I could learn nothing of the identity of the renowned Paritz. Indeed, I was more than ever inclined to consider him a myth.

"I went abroad a few months after the Yasilvitch mystery was sprung on society, and travelled almost incessantly for ten years. I visited nearly every part of the globe, finding wherever I went secret representatives of our police, with whom, being a native Russian myself, I became as intimate as possible. I tried by these means to keep track of the mythical Paritz and his trail. The secret agents had heard about the missing kopeck, but they did not know how Paritz had progressed, nor where he was.

"About a year ago interest in the count's death was suddenly revived by the arrest of a man who had a lot of rare coins on his person. They were said to be some of those missing from the murdered man's collection, and they were subjected to the closest scrutiny. The fellow arrested was an honest and illiterate peasant, who averred that he had found the coins in the weed-grown garden attached to the late count's residence. He was not released till the garden had been dug over by the authorities, whose labours were rewarded by the finding of several rare roubles known to have been described in the Yasilvitch catalogue.

"Now, more than ever, Paritz and the punched kopeck became objects of derision. Several of the Russian newspapers received satirical communications on the subject, but, as a matter of course, they were not published. A Russian editor is supposed to know just how far to go to eat his bread this side of the frontier. For fifteen years the punched kopeck has been missing to the Russian police. The Yasilvitch case is as great a mystery now as it was then, and for once Paritz has been thoroughly baffled.

"If he is not a police fiction, he knows no more to-day of the whereabouts of the mutilated kopeck than does the gentleman who inhabits the moon. Our police stand baffled by one of the most insignificant coins of the world, for, until Paritz can place the kopeck in his possession alongside the one he has not, of course the mystery of Count Yasilvitch's death cannot be solved.

"Now, let me show how completely this Paritz has

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been beaten," and a smile stole over the whiskered face of the Russian.

"I am by no means a detective myself, but we pick up queer things in our everyday wanderings. Wherever I went during my tour, I examined every coin that fell into my hands, for I was quite familiar with Count Yasilvitch's collection, and believed that I should be able to recognise any parts of it at sight. I might even admit that I grew to be a hunter of the lost coins, and of the punched kopeck in particular.

"But I came home unsuccessful. One morning in the market of St. Petersburg I received in change a lot of small coin which, being in a hurry at the time, I carried home without an examination. In my library I fell to looking at the little pieces, and what was my astonishment when I found in my hand a punched kopeck?

"There was no doubt that I had the identical coin which had baffled the acumen of the Russian police for fifteen years and for which the wonderful Paritz could almost afford to risk his head. Yes; I had found in St. Petersburg the punched kopeck which the 'sleuth' of the Empire may have chased round the world, and in order to wind up my story with the proper climax, gentlemen, here it is!"

At the same time Colonel Simovar, who had just finished his narrative, drew from his waistcoat pocket a small coin, which he placed carefully and with the proper emphasis on the table under the lamp.

His auditors, two Frenchmen and two Russians, leaned forward with gaze riveted on the coin.

"Now, I would like to see Paritz match the punched kopeck and thus vindicate the fame of the Russian police," continued Colonel Simovar, looking up at his auditors in triumph. "If he does not I may hold him up as the laughing stock of the world and prove that the Third Section is not infallible!"

The last words had barely left Simovar's lips ere a very dark hand rose over the edge of the table, and the next second, to the utter consternation of four men, another kopeck, punched exactly like the first, lay on the cloth! Colonel Simovar fell back and stared first at the second kopeck and then at the guest who had placed it where it was.

"Paritz, gentlemen, has chased the kopeck round the world," said the guest, without the semblance of a smile on his swarthy face. "He takes great pleasure in vindicating the Russian police by matching Colonel Simovar's kopeck. I am Paritz!"

Colonel Simovar laughed derisively.

"You are my friend and guest, Captain Basilvitch," said he to the so-called Paritz. "I recollect that we met in Constantinople, and again in Milan and Athens. Come, gentlemen, Captain Basilvitch is a man of humour. We will drink to his little joke."

The face of Paritz did not relax.

Rising to his feet he drew forth a small diary, the leaves of which he turned with provoking coolness.

At length he began to read of Colonel Simovar's minutest doings in France and among the Pyrenees. From this he jumped to his travels in America, and was following him step by step back to the Tsar's dominions, when Simovar threw up his hands.

"It is enough," he said, "I surrender."

The police spy bowed to the other guests.

"I take the punched kopecks, gentlemen," said he, "and the murderer of Count Yasilvitch as well;" and gathering up the two coins with one hand he touched Simovar on the shoulder with the other.

There was no resistance on the Colonel's part, and he went with Paritz and the punched kopecks to the station.

Colonel Simovar paid the severest penalty of the law for his secret crime, and from the day of the finding of the punched kopeck the name of Paritz has been invested with a new dread and terror. F. H. T.

A POSTAL IRREGULARITY.

There was too much pepper in the soup, and too little salt in the potatoes; the joint was a trifle overdone, and the pastry not done enough; and Ada's expression implied that the cook was under notice. So the conversation was monosyllabic until the cloth was removed and I had started a cigar.

"It is well to be a man," said she, "to sit and smoke and enjoy yourself."

"There is no reason," I ventured to suggest, "why a woman should not sit, or smoke, or even enjoy herself."

"Unless she has a husband."

"My dear girl!"

"A husband who can never be trusted to recollect any little thing that he is asked to do, however important."

I tried vainly to blow smoke rings, and to think what I had forgotten.

"I can't remember—" I began, shaking my head.

"You can remember easily enough when you are going to play a stupid chess match; or to watch a brutal game like football."

"Or to send for half-a-dozen things that you have left out of your stores' order; or to ask Brown to tell his wife what you forgot to say; or to—er——"

"Post a letter."

I stopped my attempts at smoke rings abruptly.

"What letter?"

"A letter which I found to-day in your overcoat pocket. You needn't glare at me. I was merely looking for handkerchiefs for the wash. You generally have half-a-dozen in your pocket."

"Why?—What?—Er—when?"

"A letter to mother which I gave you last Tuesday." She produced it from behind the clock, and laid it firmly upon the table. There was no valid line of defence, so far as I could see.

"Umph," I remarked feebly. "I suppose it's too late to post it now?"

Ada looked at me in mute wrath.

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"It was awfully stupid of me," I admitted penitently. "I can't think how I forgot it. Was it important?"

"Important! It was to ask them to get me some woollen things for baby at Tapeandrape's sale; and to send them without fail by Friday. Now of course the sale is over, and I shall have to pay twice as much for them."

"Well, I must be fined the extra cost, that's all."

"It isn't all." She produced her handkerchief, and I trembled. "I've done something that I shall never forgive myself for!

"It's all your fault!" she commenced, wiping her eyes. "A whole week and you never remembered or said a word to me. I'll never trust you with anything again, so long as I live. No, no! Go away! I hate you; and I wish I'd never seen you! There!"

"Really, my dear, you're a little unreasonable."

"Unreasonable! When you've made me offend mother and the girls; and they're so sensitive, and they've always been so good to me—ever so much better than y-y-you."

The handkerchief was again in use.

"Why ever should they be offended just because they didn't get a letter asking them to buy things at Tapeandrape's sale? Come, come, Ada, don't be a little goose!"

"It isn't only that," she wailed. "I-I wrote them another letter this morning—before I found this."

"Whew!" I whistled. "Pitching into them?"

"Yes—if you must use such vulgar expressions."

"Did you—er—say much?"

"Oh, Fred, don't ask me!" She was so evidently distressed that I laid down my cigar and tried to console her.

"You can write and explain," I suggested, "or I will."

"But I wrote so disagreeably, I thought it was so unkind, when they knew the dear little baby wanted the things; and not to send a line even."

"You can tell them that you were feeling a bit upset."

"It wasn't a 'bit.' Cook was all behind again, when I came downstairs; and I thought your breakfast would be late, and you'd be as savage as a bear."

"But, my dear girl——"

"And grumble at me."

"But I don't!"

"Well, you look grumbling. You've no idea how cross you look, Fred."

"Ah! Well, about cook?"

"I gave her notice; and she was impudent; and then I sat down and wrote the letter."

I shook my head.

"That's where you were wrong, my dear. You should never write letters when you're in a state of irri——"

She cut me short with a stamp of her foot.

"It's very nice for you to talk in that superior tone," she cried, "when it's all your fault. You'll make my life miserable with your carelessness and forgetfulness, and never doing anything that I ask you. There was the birthday card for Aunt Mary Jane, that you left on the hall stand, and she didn't get it till the day after her birthday, and was so upset!"

"But she's all right since I explained."

"And there were the fowls that you forgot to order—I might have known you would! when the Stevensons were coming to supper; and I had to take cook off her work, and send her out for them—and she was so disagreeable over it, and you know how dear things are down here."

"Everyone forgets things sometimes," I protested.

"It isn't sometimes. It's always. Now I can't trust you with a letter without your forgetting to post it. I'll never forgive you so long as I live!"

I twirled my moustache uncomfortably. I do forget letters somehow, even my own. Then something came into my mind so suddenly that I burst into a fit of laughter.

Ada looked up at me with unspeakable things in her face.

"You're a perfect brute," she cried. Then she burst into tears. "You cannot c-care for me any longer, when you l-laugh and j-jeer at my distress! I'll go away—and take b-baby——"

"But it's all right, Dadie," I cried bending over her and—never mind what!—"Didn't you give me your furious letter this morning to post?"

"You know I did!"

"Well—er—the fact is, my dear—I forgot to post this one also!"

There was silence for a minute; after which I succeeded in pulling the handkerchief away from her face.

"It was rather clever of me," I inquired, "don't you think?"

"I think," said she, "that you ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

I suppose I ought.

Owen Oliver.

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A Christmas Auction

CHAPTER I.

Going——

It wanted a fortnight to Christmas Day, when Mr. Hartington arrived at Gresham, after a few days' visit to town. The air was cold and clear, and he walked on briskly for some minutes until he paused by a lamp-post to light his pipe. A flaming bill on the wall beside him attracted his attention; it was printed in the brightest colours. He read it once, and opened his eyes in amazement; he read it a second time and exclaimed: "Either I am dreaming, or the man has gone clean out of his senses!"

For the bill contained the extraordinary announcement that the entire household furniture of Francis Gower, Esq., would be sold on Christmas Eve, Tuesday December 24th, at eleven o'clock, to the first bidder, for the sum of one shilling.

"He is a lunatic, and must be put under restraint!" said Mr, Hartington, when he had read the words for the third time, for on the 25th of December, Christmas Day, he was to have officiated as best man to Mr. Gower on his marriage with Miss Ormside, the belle of Gresham. A handsome house had been taken and furnished at great expense, and now all the valuable possessions were to go for one shilling! It was altogether too pitiable to be ludicrous.

Mr. Hartington walked on at an incredible rate of speed, entirely forgetting his pipe, but he did not go fast enough to avoid seeing at every corner repetitions of the outrageous bill.

"With Sampson's name on it, too!" he ejaculated wrathfully. "I thought he was a high-class auctioneer, and would not have played into the hands of a madman!"

He gave a thundering rat-tat-rat at his door instead of using his latchkey. His housekeeper answered the door. Without greeting her he exclaimed, "Is Gower in a madhouse or going to one?"

Mrs. Thompson looked at him in surprise.

"Can't you answer, woman; is Gower in a madhouse I say? Be quick."

"If you wouldn't come in just like a whirl-wind, Mr. Hartington, I could collect my senses," replied Mrs. Thompson in an injured tone, "and instead of standing in the hall holding your bag in your hand, if you would come into the dining-room, where a hot chicken will be served immediately, I could tell you as much as lays in my power. I must say that Mr. Gower's most extraordinary proceeding is the talk of the town."

"Why did he do it?"

"I don't know, but it is said——"

"Oh, you don't know," interrupted Mr. Hartington, "Very good; I will find out," and he reopened the front door.

"But the dinner, the chicken!" exclaimed Mrs. Thompson.

"Bother the chicken!" replied Mr. Hartington from the doorstep, "I'm off."

"It seems to me that they are a pair!" said the housekeeper wrathfully, "and after all the trouble I have taken about his dinner to-night!"

Mr. Hartington walked on at the rate of about six miles an hour, and soon reached Mr. Gower's lodgings. Without inquiring if his friend were at home, he waved the servant on one side and entered, exclaiming, before the door was fairly shut:

"Are you mad, Gower? Are you stark, staring mad?"

Mr. Gower was sitting over the fire in an attitude of extreme dejection; he was a fine, handsome man of some three or four-and-thirty; but to-night he looked ill; his hair was ruffled, his general appearance betokened insensibility to either surroundings or circumstances. He raised his head and replied, with a half smile: "It looks as if I were mad, doesn't it? But I'm not."

"What's the meaning of it?"

"Ask Miss Ormside," said Mr. Gower, with a sudden frown and a tone of suppressed fury.

"*Miss* Ormside, and why not Edith Ormside to me, seeing that I have known you both all my life?"

"Look here, Hartington, you mean well but don't try to interfere in this business; I won't have it."

"But I will interfere, you consummate idiot," said Mr. Hartington, speaking very rapidly, his nervous, energetic face all aglow. "Unless you can explain your proceedings you ought to be locked up as a lunatic. I've

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a great mind to go this minute for a couple of doctors for you. Don't you know these confounded posters have made you the talk of the town?"

"I'll thank you to mind your own business. Yes, I do know I am the talk of the town. I swore I would have my revenge, and I'm having it, and she is the talk of the town as well as I."

"Upon my word you are a nice, manly fellow," said Mr. Hartington with contempt, "and if I didn't really and truly believe that you are off your head, I would never speak to you again. When were those precious bills posted?"

"To-day."

"Then I will have them all torn down, and tell everyone you did it for a bet."

"You will do nothing of the sort. I have sworn that that sale shall take place, and take place it shall, and I advise you to let me and my affairs alone, unless you want me to thrash you," said Frank Gower with a second burst of fury.

"You thrash me!" exclaimed Mr. Hartington in an equally furious tone, "I should like to see you do it. Come on and try."

But the other sat still with such an expression of hopeless misery on his countenance that Mr. Hartington relented.

"Well," he said, "I'm going. You've insulted me and behaved like a cad, but I'm not going to bear malice. Good-night, Frank."

"Good-night," replied Mr. Gower without moving. Mr. Hartington next made his way, still at the top of his speed, to the house of Mr. Ormside. He was told that Mr. and Mrs. Ormside were dining out, but Miss Edith was at home.

"I wish to see her," he said, and again announced himself.

He shook hands, exclaiming as he did so, "What is the meaning of it all?"

Miss Ormside's cheeks were flushed, her eyes shining. She was in the state of mind in which it is a relief to people to knock the furniture about, or throw something at someone's head, or stamp with rage. But, as she was a lady, she did none of these things, but only clenched her hands, and walked up and down the room.

"The meaning of it!" she repeated. "Ask Mr. Gower."

"He told me to ask you."

"The meaning of it," she said, her bosom heaving, "is that he is a wretch, and I wish I had never seen him. He has made our affairs known all over the town, and publicly insulted me by these bills. Everyone knew the 25th, Christmas Day, was to have been our wedding-day."

"What do Mr. and Mrs. Ormside say?"

"They were both very angry; my father with him, my mother with me. They have gone out to dinner to-night to try to stop the talk and make the best version possible, though I don't know what can be said."

"But what is it all about?"

"Mr. Hartington. I recommend you not to interfere in other people's affairs."

This second snub, coming as it did to a man who had had no dinner, was a little too much for Mr. Hartington.

"I apologise," he said gravely; "I will not intrude on you again. Good-night."

"Good-night," she replied, in equally cold tones; but before he had reached the door she called him back and said, her eyes flaming, "If you see Mr. Gower tell him I *hate* him."

CHAPTER II.

Going——

The world did not seem bright to Mr. Hartington the next day. His housekeeper was sulky because his dinner had been spoilt the day before; his two best friends were alienated from him because he had done his best in all conscientiousness to do them a service; the hateful posters stared him in the face at every turn, and, worse than all, every one of his acquaintances stopped him in the street to make comments on Mr. Gower's extraordinary conduct. Everyone asked him what it meant, and to every one this faithful friend gave the same answer—that the circumstances would be explained later on; for he was not without a hope that something would arise, some miracle perhaps take place, so that the marriage might still be performed, the sale averted. He made his way to Mr. Sampson, the auctioneer.

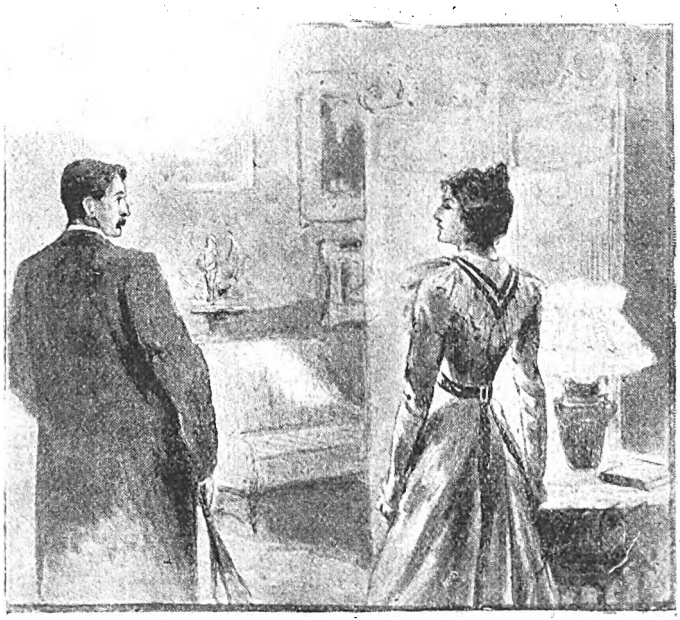
"I am surprised," he began, in his usual impetuous manner, "that you, Sampson, a high-class auctioneer, a fellow-townsman of Mr. Gower's for the last thirty years, should have lent your name to this disgraceful sale!"

"And why disgraceful?" asked Mr. Sampson, coolly.

"It is disgraceful. A house full of brand new furniture to go for a shilling. I'm ashamed of you, Sampson!"

The auctioneer knew Mr. Hartington well, and was not at all offended.

"And what was I to do?" he asked. "He would have



Before he had reached the door she called him back.

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this done, and done at an hour's notice. I said all I could to prevent it, but he declared if I wouldn't do it he would find some auctioneer who would, so I thought he would come off best in my hands."

"If you had any sense of decency you wouldn't have put those flaring colours on the posters to call everyone's attention. Auctioneers' notices are always printed in black."

"Come, come," said Mr. Sampson, in a rather offended tone, "I believe I have some sense of decency, the colours were by Mr. Gower's positive order."

"I beg your pardon, Sampson; you are a good fellow, I know, and I am sure you will do your best to stop this folly if stopped it can be."

"That I will, but I see no chance of it. I have heard no particulars, but, like every one else, I imagine there has been some deadly quarrel between him and Miss Ormside. I should be glad if anyone could patch it up. Why don't you try?"

"I have tried," returned Mr Hartington, "and my attempt has been a failure."

He left the town and took a long country walk, returning home after dark, still with a sense of depression hanging over him.

"I am in time for dinner to-day, Mrs. Thompson," he said, making an effort to rally.

"Yes, sir," replied the housekeeper, her good humour restored, "and you will find it to your liking. Miss Ormside has been here. She left a message that she would be glad if you could call round this evening. She looked as if she had been crying."

As soon as dinner was over, Mr. Hartington fulfilled the young lady's request, meditating as he went on the transitory nature of human happiness and how this Christmas Day, which was to have been a joyful one, would now be wretched to both his friends. Miss Ormside received him alone. She had lost her excitement and was looking as wretched as Mr. Gower had done.

"How good of you to come out this cold night," she said, taking Mr. Hartington's hand and leading him to an arm-chair beside the fire. "How cold you are. Do take off your great coat."

"My visit will not be a lengthy one."

"You are still offended with me. I asked you to come because I wanted to tell you how sorry I am I was rude to you last night, and you needn't be vexed with me, for I am so wretched and——"

Her utterance was impeded by tears.

"There, there, my dear," said Mr. Hartington, "you mustn't cry. Don't you know that you and I are always good friends, whatever you say to me? I was a little hurt and surprised that you showed no confidence in me, but that is all over now, and I daresay I was a meddling fool."

"But you're not, and I want to tell you everything. You are the kindest friend we have."

Mr. Hartington removed his great coat, and seated himself comfortably in front of the fire.

"Now for this woeful tale," he said.

"You know how fond Frank was of me and I of him, and we were to have been married so soon, and everything was ready—my trousseau, and that beautiful house, and the wedding presents, and the wedding cake."

"By the way, I brought you a bracelet from town. I am still in hopes I may give it."

"Thank you, but that is impossible. We have had a quarrel of such a nature that nothing can ever set it right."

"What about?"

"We went to a party and Major Cowper was very attentive, and I danced twice running with him and Frank was angry. And when he found fault I said I should dance with whoever I pleased and as many times as I pleased, and he said I shouldn't, but I was angry too, and so I danced six times running after that with Major Cowper, and then the party was over. And Frank came to me in the grounds looking white with rage, and he said I had no love for him, and called me a flirt, and I lost my temper and told him that I cared nothing about him and never had cared. But it wasn't true, Mr. Hartington, for I loved him with my whole heart, only my temper got the better of me."

"Frank came to me in the grounds and called me a flirt."

Mr. Hartington looked very grave and said nothing. Edith continued:

"And he said that if I had never cared for him, I was the falsest woman that ever lived, both in word and deed, and that he cared nothing about me, and that as I had held him up to public contempt by showing everyone that I preferred Major Cowper to him, he would show everyone that all was over between us, and that nothing would induce him to have anything more to do with me, although our banns had been read. And then these dreadful bills

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came out, showing everyone that he was thoroughly reckless, or all that lovely furniture would not go for a shilling. Oh, Mr. Hartington, can't you buy it?"

"Never mind the furniture. I must say I think you were greatly to blame, and he was a fool. But do I understand you to say that you love him still?"

"Yes, I never cared for anyone else, and I don't like Major Cowper one bit, and I don't know what came over me that night. But don't tell me you 'hope it will be a lesson' to me."

"I am sure I shall not do that."

"Thank you. If people only knew how very much more effectual a lesson is if applied by oneself than if pointed out by other people, I am sure they would not do it. Nothing enrages either children or grown-up people so much as having things 'pointed out' to them or so effectually destroys any good that might be done."

"I quite agree with you."

"Can anything be done about this wretched business?" asked Mr. Ormside in the hall, as Mr. Hartington was going away. "We wished you to see Edith alone, in the hope that you might set matters straight, but I must say I consider Gower's behaviour scandalous."

"And I Edith's," said Mrs. Ormside. "Anyone can see that he was beside himself with wounded pride and love when he had those placards out."

"I will do all I can," said Mr. Hartington, "but each of them has done all he and she can to wound one another. The difficulty of the case lies in the publicity that has been given to it."

The next day he called on Mr. Gower.

"Frank," he said earnestly, "put a stop to this farce, I beg. Have the bills of your sale removed, and make it up with Edith. I have been to see her, and I know positively that she loves you and always has done so. She is very unhappy."

"Let her be unhappy," returned Frank, moodily. "I am very unhappy also. I loved her with a great love, but I don't love her now. I *wouldn't*, unless she could prove to me as publicly that she loved me as she put me to shame publicly. But that she can't do, and I have done with her."

"She told me with tears in her eyes that she loved you. I will stake my life she spoke the truth."

"Then she told a lie before. I have done with her."

According to promise Mr. Hartington communicated the result of this interview to Edith. For a moment her spirit was roused.

"He seems to forget how publicly he has put me to shame," she said, but nevertheless Frank's words "unless she could prove to me publicly that she loved me," rang in her ears, and would not go from her.

Mr. Gower went to London, the days dragged slowly on.

"Can't you stop that sale, Sampson," said Mr. Hartington, "as Gower is away?"

"Can't!" replied the auctioneer, "my professional reputation is involved. I can't do it without directions from Mr. Gower."

* * * * *

Christmas Day was fast approaching; everyone, it seemed to Edith, was happy and joyous except herself. She spent her days in absolute seclusion, and the talk of Gresham increased as the day for the sale drew near. She saw no hope for herself, although she had put her pride on one side and resolved that she would take advantage of any opening that might present itself. Suddenly an idea occurred to her, which caused her cheeks to glow. She sent for Mr. Hartington in hot haste, and communicated her thoughts.

"But would you like to do such a thing as that?" he asked in amazement.

"No," she replied, "it would be dreadful to me to do it, but it is the only way. Frank is so terribly proud, and I can't think of anything else. You know he has sworn this sale shall take place."

Mr. Hartington departed, reflecting on the wonderful ways of women. Edith's scheme was most objectionable to him, and yet he, too, saw no other way open. To Mr. Sampson he went and held a conversation with him.

"I haven't the smallest right to do what you suggest," said the auctioneer, "but for old friendship's sake I will, though probably Gower will knock me down."

"Let him," said Mr. Hartington, "and I'll knock him down afterwards."

Mr. Sampson telegraphed to Mr. Gower that he entirely declined to perform the sale unless he himself were present in the house. Mr. Gower telegraphed in reply that he would be on the spot.

He had his arm round Edith and had taken her away.

CHAPTER III.

Gone.

Christmas Eve opened bright and clear. The air was frosty, but the sun shone. The church bells rang out at eight o'clock for early service and Edith attended, her heart dying within her as she thought of what she had set herself to do at eleven. The projected auction had given

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great annoyance to the Vicar of Gresham, who had remonstrated both with Mr. Gower and Mr. Sampson, to no effect.

"Surely the auction could have been held another day than Christmas Eve," said the Vicar. "It is a shocking example," for Gresham was a very High Church-town.

"I can't help it," said Mr. Sampson.

"But you could have helped it," retorted the Vicar, angry at the postponement of the wedding. A great number of families attended church at eleven, but shortly before that hour Mr. Gower's elegant house was filled with brokers, auctioneers, men, and all the young men of the neighbourhood, who had assembled in a body to see the fun. The furniture was not disturbed; as it was to be sold intact there was no occasion to touch it, said Mr. Sampson, whose rostrum was placed in the large dining-room. He himself looked anxious, and listened with disfavour to the jokes that were freely circulating about Mr. Gower and his affairs.

Meantime Mr. Hartington was with Mr. Gower.

"Tom," said the latter, "I have woke up to the fact that I have made a great ass of myself by this sale, but I can't stop it now."

"You can't," assented his friend.

"I was so madly in love with her that I was wild with rage when she provoked me, and I would have done anything. It's too late to help it now."

"It is too late," again assented his friend.

"I have sometimes thought since I have been in London that she must have cared for me. I wish she did now."

"Will this prove to you that she does?" asked Mr. Hartington, joyfully, and speaking a few further words very rapidly.

"It's impossible," said Mr. Gower.

"It's not impossible; it's true. Come along now and see."

"Come this moment," returned Frank, with excitement; "what are you delaying about? She can't do such a thing for love of me, after my conduct about the sale. Come, how slow you are; the sale will be over unless you make haste. Make haste," he said, rushing from the house.

"I don't think the sale will be over," said Mr. Hartington drily.

* * * * *

The sale was about to commence, groups of expectant brokers were standing about, prepared at any loss to assert their right to the first bid.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Sampson, "you are all aware that this sale is one of an unusual character. You are all aware that for a houseful of new and elegant furniture to go for the sum of one shilling to the first bidder is a very extraordinary thing. But there is a condition attached to the sale, a most serious condition."

The faces of the brokers grew grave.

"That condition, gentlemen, renders it useless for any married man to make the bid."

The faces of the brokers fell, for they were all married men.

"Briefly, a young lady must accompany the furniture; he who buys it must wed her. Before I receive your bid, I will produce her."

He left the room. Breathless silence followed disturbed shortly by the hurried entrance of two gentlemen, who placed themselves at the further end of the room.

"It's a shame, makin' this condition and deceivin' us into comin' here Christmas Eve and all," said a portly broker.

"Silence!" shouted someone, as the door opened and Mr. Sampson appeared leading a very lovely girl dressed in white.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Sampson, "this is the young lady."

All eyes were fixed on Edith Ormside, who stood still as a statue, her colour high, her head slightly bent.

Mr. Sampson mounted his rostrum.

"Now," he said, looking towards the end of the room, "who bids?"

"I do," shouted Frank Gower in a voice of thunder, before anyone else could speak, and before the scene had been well taken in by the audience he had his arm round Edith and had taken her away.

"The lesson has been a severe one, but it has been effectually learnt, Frank," she said.

* * * * *

Service was over at the Parish Church, and yet the congregation kept their seats, for a wedding party was coming up the aisle, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Ormside, Edith, Mr. Hartington and Mr. Gower. The clergy returned to the chancel, and Christmas-time saw Frank and Edith man and wife. But to this hour the good people of Gresham are mystified. H. F. Curfett.

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT THE WAR.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "The Knight of the Golden Chain," by R. D. Chetwode, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source must be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. H. E. Luck, 19 Cleveland Road, Chichester. Attempts for this week's prize should deal with WAR ANECDOTES and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, February 19th. Post-cards only, please.

Not Quite the Same Thing.

"I'll admit this much," said an English trooper to a Boer he had captured, "you fellows have got plenty of grit."

"Yes," said the Boer looking pleased, "we're pretty brave, aren't we?"

"Oh, you don't understand," said the soldier. "I'm referring to the grit in those German shells of yours; they're full of sand, you know, that's why they won't burst."

H. E. L.

A Hint to the Weather Prophet.

He entered the meteorological service office and said in his jerky way:

"This ere's where you give out weather predictions, ain't it?"

The clerk nodded.

"Well," continued the old man, "I thought as how I would come up and give you some tips."

"Yes," said the clerk politely.

"Yes. I've figured on it a little, an' I find that ye ain't always right."

"No, we sometimes make mistakes."

"Course you do. We all do sometimes. Now, I was thinkin' as how a line that used to be on the auction hand-bills down in our county might do fust-rate on your weather predictions and save you a lot of explainin'."

"What was the line?"

"Wind an' weather permittin'."

He went down without waiting to say good-bye.

D. R.

Rebuking "President Kruger."

On a train pulling up for a short stop at our local station recently, a fringe-whiskered cleric began to overhaul the publications on an attendant newsboy's tray; but, after looking at all the war illustrations and deliberately enjoying a literary feast in *Short Stories*, he calmly declined to buy anything.

For a few moments the lad was speechless with disgust, then, with all the withering sarcasm at his command, and to the intense delight of a number of onlookers, he loudly remarked:

"Beggin' yur pardon, President Kruger, I thought everybody knew I wos sellin' these books an' papers, but it seems that you've taken me fer a bloomin' walkin' free library!"

J. G.

Not Flattering to Tennyson.

Dante Rossetti used to tell a story of Tennyson, with whom he was walking one sultry summer night through High Holborn. They passed a building brilliantly lighted up, and from which issued the sounds of joyous music.

"What is that place?" asked the bard.

"It is called," replied Rossetti, "the Holborn Casino."

"I should like to look in," pursued Tennyson, "only I should be at once surrounded by a crew of groundlings who would mob and pester and jostle me."

"My dear sir," quietly remarked Rossetti, "if you were to get on one of the tables, announce your name, and recite three of your poetic masterpieces into the bargain, probably not two per cent. of the audience would have the slightest idea who you were!"

N. T.

Pat the Jarvey.

I know a remarkably pretty woman, who lives in the suburbs of Belfast.

One day she went into Belfast for a day's shopping.

Arriving at the first car stand, and having selected a tolerably clean vehicle, said to the driver that she "wanted to engage him for the day."

Poor Pat, never backward in paying homage to beauty, earnestly replied:

"Oh, ma'am, I only wish it was for life."

M. M.

Sorry for the Sinners.

A little girl was graciously permitted one bright Sunday to go with her mamma to hear papa preach. It was a time of great rejoicing and responsibility, and the little face was all alight with happy anticipation.

Now, it chanced that on this special occasion papa's sermon was of the "warning" order, and his earnest voice rang out solemnly in the Sunday quiet. After a moment of breathless surprise and horror, the little listener's soul was wrought upon with a great pity for the poor mortals upon whom so much wrath was descending.

She rose excitedly to her feet, and her wide reproachful eyes just peeping over the back of the seat, called out in sweet, chiding tones:

"What for is you scolding all the people so, papa?"

F. B.

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Putting Tags on Dogs.

THERE was a certain master of foxhounds in one of the English shires who was greatly angered by the awkwardness of one of the gentlemen, who invariably rode over the hounds.

At one of the meets, the M.F.H. rode up to the awkward hunter, and, in the most chilling tones, remarked:

"Mr. So-and-So, there are two dogs in the pack to-day, Snap and Tatters, of whom I am especially fond, and I would esteem it a favour if you would avoid killing or maiming them with your horse's hoofs."

"Certainly, my dear fellow," replied Mr. So-and-So, "but as I do not know them, will you be kind enough to put tags on them for me?" C. J.

A Cheap Way of Getting Doctor's Advice.

A GOOD story has just been told by a family doctor regarding a little ruse adopted by one of his patients who wished to save the expense of consulting him.

The patient was a woman of good means, but of frugal disposition. One day she began to feel some alarm regarding her health, and wishing to avoid a costly procedure, made an application to a life insurance company for a policy of large amount—so large, indeed, that they delegated three medical men to make an exhaustive examination of her before they could accept her as a risk.

In due time she was informed that her life had been accepted. She was thus in a position to assume that she was quite well, whereupon she replied to the company that she had changed her mind, and did not intend to take out a policy just then. A. B.

Quite Natural.

A STORY is told of an Oxford undergraduate who had been requested to entertain a party of London costermongers, and who had been advised by his friends working in the East-end to be "perfectly natural" in his conversation.

At breakfast he was very nervous, but at last managed to say:

"Ahem! aha! er-r-r-r-r. Many people in town just now?"

"Yus, gov'ner. About five million," was a coster's quick answer.

The host gave up trying to be "natural" after that. P. T.

A Choice of Three Things.

AUSTRALIAN judges make jokes that would hardly pass muster on this side of the equator. One of them recently going on circuit arrived at a town where a clean charge-sheet was presented for his acceptance, accompanied, of course, with the inevitable pair of white gloves. Having accepted the gift, he returned thanks in these terms:

"This proves that either the district possesses an unusually high standard of morality, or that there is nothing in it worth stealing, or that the police are not active enough to catch criminals."

Leaving his hearers in doubt as to which of the three alternatives he personally favoured, the judge smiled sweetly at the local head of the police force, and retired from the bench. W. S.

A TALE OF THE FIGHT FOR AFRICA.

BRITON OR BOER?

By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

WILL COMMENCE IN . . .

SHORT STORIES

. . . DATED FEBRUARY 24TH.

For Further Particulars see Next Week.

For years past Britain and the Transvaal have been spoiling for a fight, and it was left to that well-known author, Mr. George Griffith, to write a strong and exciting serial nearly four years ago graphically describing a huge war between the two countries.

Now that Briton and Boer are in deadly conflict it will be interesting to read the story, and see how far the imagination of the author has actually come true.

BRITON OR BOER?

deals with how the countries fought out their final fight for the possession of the richest region of the earth and one of the fairest portions of the British Empire.

The crack of the rifle and the scream of the shell will echo in the readers' ears from the rock-walls of the kopjes where the Boers lie hidden with their deadly rifles in wait for their foes.

The secret plottings of scheming politicians for the ruin of England will be laid bare and vividly contrasted with the deeds of heroism which confounded them. It will tell how Valour and Devotion grappled with Treason and Treachery, and how the murders of Bronkhorst Spuit were avenged and the shame of Majuba Hill wiped out.

Its chief characters will not be fictions of the imagination, but life-pictures of the very men who at that moment were on the one side plotting and scheming for the destruction of British power in Africa, and on the other fighting gallantly to uphold it.

It will show how those who were crying peace were in reality sharpening the sword in secret, and how that sword, drawn by stealth to stab in the dark, was blunted and broken in the inevitable day of battle.

Mr. George Griffith says: "In the romance of which the first chapters will be published in SHORT STORIES dated February 24th, I have attempted to answer in the form of an essay in prophetic fiction the question which forms the title of the story: 'Is the Briton or the Boer, the Englishman or the Dutch-Afrikander, going to rule South Africa?'"

Do not fail to order your

Short Stories

for next week at once.

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THE GHOST OF THE "PENGUIN."

For more than a week the *Penguin* had lain at anchor in the little harbour at Bastia. She was a small schooner, a weather-beaten lubberly craft with her yards splintered and one of her masts broken, yet she looked strangely picturesque, standing with bare poles against the flaming sky, as I allowed my little boat to drift before the gentle breeze.

Aboard the craft there were no signs of life visible, and I knew that Muggins must be ashore, filling himself with rum, as was his custom when Captain Darke was absent.

My old friend, the captain, had been beating about the Mediterranean with his lubberly schooner for half-a-score of years; and so he might still have been engaged but for the arrival of a letter at Bastia telling him of a newly-inherited fortune left him by an uncle who had been living in Florence.

But upon receipt of the good news he was off at once, leaving his disabled schooner in charge of Muggins, an old sailor who was more honest than sober.

As my boat drifted alongside the *Penguin* I perceived a rope trailing over the port side, and, making my little craft fast, I drew myself up on deck.

I looked about me, but no one was visible. It was evident that I was the only soul aboard the *Penguin*.

I threw myself on a camp-stool in the shadows of the sail, and fell to regarding the range of dark hills that rose at the back of the romantic little city. Presently I was interrupted by the sound of oars, and a few moments later Muggin's tawny head appeared over the rail. He started when he saw me, and was about to beat a hasty retreat, when my voice stopped him.

"Bless me, I thought you were a ghost, I did, by the powers!" he said, seeming well pleased that his fears had not been realised.

"Well, now, what the dickens is there about me, Muggins, to make you think me a ghost?" I asked.

"Oh, it isn't that you look like a ghost, Mr. Raymond," he returned apologetically. "But, you see, when a chap is looking to see a ghost, he's pretty certain to take the first live thing his eyes fall on for what he's looking for."

"Then you were expecting to see something of the supernatural kind?"

"That's a fact, Mr. Raymond, though 'tain't often a chap is believed when he tells such a story. There's a ghost on this old hulk, or else I'm losing my eyesight."

"And you really believe in such nonsense?"

"I believe what I sees that's all."

"What did you see?"

"Well, since you ask, I don't mind telling you. You see, since Captain Darke went away and the crew were discharged, the *Penguin* has been under my care, and I have been sleeping aboard this vessel and spending most of my time here. Last night, about two o'clock, I woke, thinking I heard something moving near me. I was sleeping in my cot on the deck, and as I looks about me I sees a woman, all in white, moving like a spectre right by the hatchway.

"While I was watching, it seemed to sink into the deck and disappear. I'm not the man to run from a single night-prowler, but I felt queer-like at this, and can't see how a woman could be on the *Penguin*. Thinking she might have gone down the companion-ladder, I goes down with a lantern but finds nothing. Then I looks over the ship, with the same result. I slept no more that night, and though I look after the ship, during the day, I shan't sleep here again if I know myself, call it ghost or what you will."

With this he picked up a lantern and descended to his boat that lay alongside.

"Then I shall spend the night here, and lay your ghost for you," I said.

"I'll thank you if you will," he returned, "though I'll be blowed if I think you'll do it. Good-night, Mr. Raymond. I'll drop alongside early in the morning and see how you have fared. There's the key of my cabin," he added, tossing the key upon deck. "You'll find pipes and plenty of 'bacco, and a sip of rum in a decanter, if you look close. Now again, good night to you."

His oars dipped in to the water, and he was gone.

Dusk was already settling over the water. I took a seat on the deck and lit a cigar, and began running over in my mind some of the events that had befallen me since my arrival in Corsica.

For more than three months I had been staying in the romantic little island, finding a restful charm in its quiet seclusion that was a pleasing contrast to the life I had been spending for the past two years in the gay capital of the restless and pleasure-loving French.

One is not likely to expect to meet with adventures of the thrilling kind in the peaceful precincts of Bastia, yet something bordering upon this had come to my lot less than a month before.

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For the amateur artist the quaint little city will furnish many subjects for the pencil and brush, and I had made good my opportunities since my arrival.

The most prized among my collection was the portrait of Veda, the little Corsican fruitseller. There was something fascinating in her very pose, and the dark beauty of her face had drawn me to her as if by some subtle witchery.

One evening, as I was strolling through the streets, I heard a cry of mortal terror come from the court of a ruined building where several poor families had taken their abode, and entering hastily, I perceived an aged woman, a withered hag, with uplifted knife, in the act of striking a girl who was crouched in the corner of the wall.

I struck the knife aside, and the would-be murderess fled, leaving me face to face with Veda, the intended victim.

She only paused a moment to press a kiss upon my hand, then she slipped through a gap in the wall and was gone. That was the last I had seen of her.

To my inquiries regarding her whereabouts I received no information, excepting a bit of her past history, which told me that she had belonged to a wealthy and influential family, and that she had received a finished education. But reverses had come. Her father had fallen a victim to a dreadful vendetta, and she had finally been left a penniless orphan.

I was deeply interested in her, but no one could give me the slightest clue as to whither she had fled.

Still I had lingered about the places where I used to see her. Was I in love with the little Corsican beauty?

Her face would come before my mental vision asleep or waking, bringing a sweet sensation I had never before experienced; and yet I tried to dismiss her from my thoughts.

I sat smoking for some hours upon the deck of the *Penguin*, watching the yellow lights dancing in the romantic little city, and drinking in the fresh, sweet air of the night that stole up from the Mediterranean.

It was about eleven o'clock when I stretched myself upon the cot which Muggins had placed upon the deck. I fell asleep soon after, and dreamed of Muggins' ghost.

It seemed that some strange presence came to me—a woman, beautiful beyond any dream; and just as I reached out to touch her she vanished, leaving only a faint odour of some strange sweet perfume. I awoke suddenly with that inexplicable sensation that sometimes tells us of the unseen presence of another.

I sat up and looked about me in vague bewilderment. The moon had risen out of the sea, and was flooding the deck with its mellow radiance.

As my mind grew more composed I detected a subtle perfume on the night air—the same that had come to me in my dream.

Was it only the effect of my imagination? No; there could be no mistake as to its reality. Something white lay at my feet. I picked it up. It was a delicate piece of lace-embroidered linen, and exhaled the breath of perfume that had before greeted my senses.

While I stood bewildered at the amazing circumstance I perceived a white form emerge from the hatchway and move forward with a slow, gliding movement.

I stood speechless, staring at the strange figure, the words of the superstitious Muggins coming with sudden force to my mind; and in spite of my utter disbelief in the sailor's absurd story, something like a feeling of awe came over me.

I stood immovable, watching the figure as it came towards me. As it drew near I perceived that it was a girl, and as the moonbeams fell on the pale face I recognised it as belonging to Veda Dorlos, the little fruitseller.

Her eyes were wide open, and staring vacantly ahead in a way peculiar to a somnambulist. She was a sleepwalker! The thought came to me like a flash. Yet what could account for her presence aboard the *Penguin?*

Without attempting to solve the puzzle, I started towards the figure; but, as I did so, the sound of something like the dropping of an oar in a boat came from over the port. Then a moment later the dark figure of a woman—the same I had seen making the assault on the little fruit seller—slipped noiselessly over the rail. She paused for but a moment to glance about the ship; then, with a cry of rage that might have proceeded from some wild animal in deadly combat, she leaped upon the unconscious girl, the blade of a long knife glinting in the light of the moon. Roused to action by the sight of the murderous intruder, I leaped quickly forward, and before the knife descended to do its deadly work, I caught the hand that held it

But if I reckoned on an easy victory in subduing my adversary, I soon discovered my mistake for the woman though aged to all appearances, seemed to possess the strength of the strongest man, and, finding herself foiled in her murderous attempt, she turned upon me with the fierceness of a panther. Coming unexpected as the attack did, it caught me off my guard, and before I realised my peril, the hand that held the knife was wrenched from my grasp; then there was a swift blow. I felt a keen pain in my shoulder as the blade entered, then a mist gathered before my eyes, and I sank unconscious upon the deck.

* * * * *

When my senses returned it was broad daylight, and I was lying on a cot in Muggin's cabin, the beautiful but troubled face of Veda bending over me.

It was a week before I was able to go ashore, and though I had a trained nurse from Bastia, Veda refused to leave me entirely in the hands of another.

Well, in that week I learned to love the little Corsican beauty with such an intense devotion that I could not bear the thought of a separation.

Her life had been one of trials and misfortunes. The old hag who had twice sought the life of Veda was prevented from taking my life by the timely arrival of Muggins, who had come over to the vessel in his boat just before daybreak to see how I was faring. Finding herself thwarted, she leaped into the bay, and was drowned before she could be rescued by Muggins.

She was the last of the Boralodo family, between whom and the Dorlos a dreadful vendetta had existed, and it was to escape the vengeance of the old woman that Veda had stowed herself aboard the *Penguin*, hoping to be carried to some foreign land and thus escape the violent death that constantly threatened her.

Veda and I were married, and a month later were enjoying our honeymoon on board the *Penguin* with my old friend Captain Darke, who had returned and had the vessel repaired.

Muggins was much elated over the happy ending of my attempt to "lay" his ghost, though he always declared I had made a most lucky failure, and instead of laying the ghost, I had myself been layed by it. H. T. H.

THE ANGEL OF THE REVOLUTION

By GEORGE GRIFFITH

CHAPTER LXVIII.

THE JUDGMENT OF NATAS.

THE myriad-voiced chorus of the Song of the Revolution ended in a mighty shout of jubilant hurrahs, in the midst of which the *Ariel* dropped lightly to the earth, and Tremayne, dressed now in the grey uniform of the Federation, with a small red rosette on the left breast of his tunic, descended from her deck to the ground with a drawn sword in his hand.

He was at once recognised by several of the leaders, and as the words "The Chief, the Chief," ran from lip to lip, those in the front ranks brought their rifles to the present, while the captains saluted with their swords. The British regulars and volunteers followed suit as if by instinct, and the chorus of cheers broke out again. Tremayne acknowledged the salute and raised his hand to command silence.

A hush at once fell upon the assembled multitude, and in the deep silence of anticipation which followed, he said in clear, ringing tones:

"Soldiers of the Federation and the Empire, that which I hope will be the last battle of the Western nations has been fought and won. The Anglo-Saxon race has rallied to the defence of its motherland, and in the blood of its invaders has wiped out the stain of conquest. It has met the conquerors of Europe in arms, and on the field of battle it has vindicated its right to the empire of the world.

"Henceforth the destinies of the human race are in its keeping, and it will worthily discharge the responsibility. It may yet be necessary for you to fight other battles with other races; but the victory that has attended you here will wait upon your arms elsewhere, and then the curse and the shame of war will be removed from the earth, let us hope for ever. European despotism has fought its last battle and lost, and those who have appealed to the sword shall be judged by the sword."

As he said this, he pointed with his weapon towards the Tsar and his staff, and continued, with an added sternness in his voice:

"In the Master's name, take those men prisoners! Their fate will be decided to-morrow. Forward a company of the First Division; your lives will answer for theirs!"

As the Chief ended his brief address to the victorious troops, ten men, armed with revolver and sword stepped forward, each followed by ten others armed with rifle and fixed bayonet, and immediately formed in a hollow square round the Tsar and his staff. This summary proceeding proved too much for the outraged dignity of the fallen Autocrat, and he stepped forward and cried out passionately:

"What is this? Is not my surrender enough? Have we not fought with civilised enemies that we are to be treated like felons in the hour of defeat?"

Tremayne raised his sword and cried sharply, "To the ready!" and instantly the prisoners were encircled by a hedge of levelled bayonets and rifle-barrels charged with death. Then he went on, in stern, commanding tones:

"Silence there! We do not recognise what you call the usages of civilised warfare. You are criminals against humanity, assassins by wholesale, and as such you shall be treated."

There was nothing for it but to submit to the indignity, and within a few minutes the Tsar and those who with him had essayed the enslavement of the world, were lodged in separate rooms in the building under a strong guard to await the fateful issue of the morrow.

The rest of the night was occupied in digging huge trenches for the burial of the almost innumerable dead, a task which, gigantic as it was, was made light by the work of hundreds of thousands of willing hands. Those of the invaders who had fallen in London itself were taken down the Thames on the ebb tide in fleets of lighters, towed by steamers, and were buried at sea. Happily it was mid-winter, and the temperature remained some degrees below freezing point, and so the great City was saved from what in summer would infallibly have brought pestilence in the track of war.

At twelve o'clock on the following day the vast interior of St. Paul's Cathedral was thronged with the anxious spectators of the last scene in the tremendous tragedy which had commenced with the destruction of Kronstadt by the *Ariel* and which had culminated in the triumph of Anglo-Saxondom over the leagued despotism of Europe.

At a long table draped with red cloth, and placed under the dome in front of the chancel steps, sat Natas, with Tremayne and Natasha on his right hand, and Arnold and Alexis Mazanoff on his left. Radna, Anna Ornovsky, and the other members of the Inner Circle of the Terrorists, including the President, Nicholas Roburoff, who had been pardoned and restored to his office at the intercession of Natasha, occupied the other seats, and behind them stood a throng of leaders of the Federation forces.

Neither the King of England nor any of his Ministers or military officers were present, as they had no voice in the proceedings which were about to take place. It had been decided, at a consultation with them earlier in the day, that it would be better that they should be absent.

That which was to be done was unparalleled in the history of the world and outside the recognised laws of nations; and so their prejudices were respected, and they were spared what they might have looked upon as an outrage of international policy and the ancient but mistaken traditions of so-called civilised warfare.

In front of the table two double lines of Federation

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soldiers, with rifles and fixed bayonets, kept a broad clear passage down to the western doors of the Cathedral. The murmur of thousands of voices suddenly hushed as the Cathedral clock struck the first stroke of twelve. It was the knell of an empire and a despotism. At the last stroke Natas raised his hand and said:

"Bring up the prisoners!"

There was a quick rustling sound mingled with the clink of steel as the two grey lines stiffened up to attention. Twelve commanders of divisions marched with drawn swords down to the end of the nave, a few rapid orders were given, and then they returned heading two double files of Federation guards, between which, handcuffed like common felons, walked the once mighty Tsar and the ministers of his now departed tyranny.

The footsteps of the soldiers and their captives rang clearly upon the stones in the ominous breathless silence which greeted their appearance. The fallen autocrat and his servants walked with downcast heads like men in a dream, for to them it was a dream, this sudden and incomprehensible catastrophe which had overwhelmed them in the very hour of victory, and on the threshold of the conquest of the world.

Three days ago they had believed themselves conquerors, with the world at their feet, now they were being marched guarded and in shackles, to a tribunal which acknowledged no law but its own, and from whose decision there was no appeal. Truly it was a dream, such a dream of disaster and calamity as no earthly despot had ever dreamt before.

Four paces from the table they were halted, the Tsar in the centre facing his unknown judge, and his servants on either side of him. He recognised Natasha, Anna Ornovsky, Arnold, and Tremayne, but the recognition only added to his bewilderment.

He thought, in a dazed sort of fashion, of the ball at the British Embassy in St. Petersburg, and of the first trial of the war-balloon in the Gatschina Park, and of the breast-pin that he had given the young English engineer who had so strangely escaped the death prepared for him, and of the mysterious way in which the jewel had been returned to him.

In the supreme hour of his fate it was these comparative trifles that were uppermost in his mind. To the millions who had fallen in battle since then he gave no thought; their lives were but as counters in the mighty game that he had played and lost.

There was a slight flush on the face of Natas, and an angry gleam in his dark magnetic eyes as he watched his captives approach, but when he spoke his tones were calm and passionless, the tones of the conqueror and the judge, rather than of the deeply injured man and the personal enemy. As the prisoners were halted in front of the table and the rifle-butts of the guards rang sharply on the stone pavement, so deep a hush fell upon the vast throng in the Cathedral that men seemed to hold their breath rather than break it until the Master of the Terror began to speak.

"Alexander Romanoff, late Tsar of the Russians, and now prisoner of the executive of the Brotherhood of Freedom, otherwise known to you as the Terrorists—you have been brought here with your advisers and the ministers of your tyranny that your crimes may be recounted in the presence of this congregation, and to receive sentence of such punishment as it is possible for human justice to mete out to you——"

"I deny both your justice and your right to judge. It is you who are the criminals, conspirators, and enemies of Society. I am a crowned King and above all earthly laws——"

Before he could say any more two bayonets crossed in front of him with a sharp clash, and he was instantly thrust back into his place.

"Silence!" said Natas, in a tone of such stern command that even he instinctively obeyed. "As for our justice, let that be decided between you and me when we stand before a more awful tribunal than this. My right to judge even a crowned King who has no longer a crown, rests, as your own authority and that of all earthly rulers has ever done, upon the power to enforce my sentence, and I can and will enforce it upon you, you heir of a usurping murderess, whose throne was founded in blood and supported by the bayonets of her hired assassins. You have appealed to the arbitration of battle, and it was decided against you; you must therefore abide by its decision.

"You have waged a war of merciless conquest at the bidding of insatiable ambition. You have posed as the peace-keeper of Europe until the train of war was laid, as you and your allies thought, in secret, and then you let loose the forces of havoc upon your fellow-men without ruth or scruple. Your path of victory has been traced in blood and flames from one end of Europe to the other; you have sacrificed the lives of millions, and the happiness of millions more, to a dream of world-wide empire, which, if realised, would have been a universal despotism.

"The blood of the uncounted slain cries out from earth to heaven against you for vengeance. The days are past when those who made war upon their kind could claim the indulgence of their conquerors. You have been conquered by those who hold that the crime of aggressive war cannot be atoned for by the transfer of territory or the payment of money.

"If this were your only crime we would have blood for blood, and life for life, as far as yours could pay the penalty. But there is more than this to be laid to your charge, and the swift and easy punishment of death would be too light an atonement for Justice to accept.

"Since you ascended your throne you have been as the visible shape of God in the eyes of a hundred million subjects. Your hands have held the power of life and death, of freedom and slavery, of happiness and misery. How have you used it, you who have arrogated to yourself the attributes of a vicegerent of God on earth? As the power is so too is the responsibility, and it will not avail you now to shelter yourself from it behind the false traditions of diplomacy and statecraft.

"Your subjects have starved while you and yours have feasted. You have lavished millions in vain display upon your palaces while they have died in their hovels for lack of bread, and when men have asked you for freedom and justice you have given them the knout, the chain, and the prison.

"You have parted the wife from her husband——"

Here for the moment the voice of Natas trembled with irrepressible passion, which, before he could proceed, broke from his heaving breast in a deep sob that thrilled the vast assembly like an electric shock, and made men clench their hands and grit their teeth, and wrung an answering sob from the breast of many a woman who knew but too well the meaning of those simple yet terrible words. Then Natas recovered his outward composure and went on; but now there was an angrier gleam in his eyes, and a fiercer ring in his voice.

"You have parted the wife from her husband, the maid from her lover, the child from its parents. You have made desolate countless homes that once were happy, and broken hearts that had no thought of evil towards you—and you have done all this, and more, to maintain as vile a despotism as ever insulted the justice of men, or mocked at the mercy of God.

"In the inscrutable working of Eternal Justice it has come to pass that your sentence shall be uttered by the lips of one of your victims. For no offence known to the laws of earth or Heaven, my flesh has been galled by your chains and torn by your whips. I have toiled to win your ill-gotten wealth in your mines, and by the hands of your brutal servants the iron has entered into my soul. Yet I am but one of thousands whose undeserved agony cries out against you in this hour of judgment.

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"Can you give us back what you have taken from us—the years of life, and health, and happiness, our wives and our children, our lovers and our kindred? You have ravished, but you cannot restore. You have smitten, but you cannot heal. You have killed, but you cannot make alive again. If you had ten thousand lives they could not atone, though each were dragged out to the bitter end in the misery that you have meted out to others.

"But so far as you and yours can pay the debt it shall be paid to the uttermost farthing. Every pang that you have inflicted you shall endure. You shall drag your chains over Siberian snows, and when you faint by the wayside the lash shall revive you, as in the hands of your brutal Cossacks it has goaded on your fainting victims. You shall sweat in the mine, and shiver in the cell, and your wives and your children shall look upon your misery and be helpless to help you, even as have been the fond one who have followed your victims to exile and death.

"They have seen your crimes without protest, and shared in your wantonness. They have toyed with gold and jewels which they knew were bought with the price of misery and death, and so it is just that they should see your suffering and share in your doom.

"To the mines for life! And when the last summons comes to you and me, may Eternal Justice judge between us, and in its equal scales weigh your crimes against your punishment. Begone! for you have looked your last on freedom. You are no longer men; you are outcasts from the pale of the brotherhood of the humanity you have outraged!

"Alexis Mazanoff, you will hold yourself responsible for the lives of the prisoners, and the execution of their sentence. You will see them in safe keeping for the present, and on the thirtieth day from now you will set out for Siberia."

The sentence of Natas, the most terrible one which human lips could have uttered under the circumstances, was received with a breathless silence of awe and horror. Then Mazanoff rose from his seat, drew his sword, and saluted.

As he passed round the end of the table the guards closed up round the prisoners, who were staring about them in stupefied bewilderment at the incredible horror of the fate which in a moment had hurled them from the highest pinnacle of earthly power and splendour down to the degradation and misery of the most wretched of their own Siberian convicts. No time was given for protest or appeal, for Mazanoff instantly gave the word "Forward!" and, surrounded by a hedge of bayonets, the doomed men were marched rapidly down between the two grey lines.

As they reached the bottom of the nave the great central doors swung open, and through them came a mighty roar of execration from the multitude outside as they appeared on the top of the Cathedral steps.

From St. Paul's Churchyard, down through Ludgate Hill and up the Old Bailey to the black, frowning walls of Newgate, they were led through triple lines of Federation soldiers amidst a storm of angry cries from the crowd on either side, cries which changed to a wild outburst of savage, pitiless exultation as the news of their dreadful sentence spread rapidly from lip to lip. They had shed blood like water, and had known no pity in the hour of their brief triumph, and so none was shown for them in the hour of their fall and retribution.

CHAPTER LXIX.

The Ordering of Europe.

The hour following the disappearance of the Tsar and his ministers from the cathedral was spent in a brief and simple service of thanksgiving for the victory which had wiped the stain of foreign invasion from the soil of Britain in the blood of the invader, and given the control of the destinies of the Western world finally into the hands of the dominant race of earth.

The service began with a brief but eloquent address from Natas, in which he pointed out the consequences of the victory and the tremendous responsibilities to the generations of men in the present and the future which it entailed upon the victors. He concluded with the following words:

"My own part in this world-revolution is played out. For more than twenty years I have lived solely for the attainment of one object, the removal of the blot of Russian tyranny upon European civilisation, and the necessary punishment of those who were guilty of the unspeakable crime of maintaining it at such a fearful expense of life and suffering.

"That object has now been accomplished; the soldiers of freedom have met their hirelings of despotism on the field of the world's Armageddon, and the God of Battles has decided between them. Our motives may have been mistaken by those who only saw the bare outward appearance without knowing their inward intention, and our ends have naturally been misjudged by those who fancied their accomplishment meant their own ruin.

"Yet, as the events have proved, and will yet prove in the ages to come, we have been but as intelligent instruments in the hand of that eternal wisdom and justice which, though it may seem to sleep for a season, and permit the evildoer to pursue his wickedness for a space, never closes the eye of watchfulness or sheaths the sword of judgment. The empire of the earth has been given into the hands of the Anglo-Saxon race, and therefore it is fitting that the supreme control of affair should rest in the hands of one of Anglo-Saxon blood and lineage.

"For that reason I now surrender the power which I have so far exercised as the Master of the Brotherhood of Freedom into the hands of Alan Tremayne, known in Britain as Earl of Alanmere and Baron Tremayne, and from this moment the Brotherhood of Freedom, more commonly known and spoken of as the Terrorists, ceases to exist, for its ends are attained, and the objects for which it was founded have been accomplished.

"With the confidence born of intimate knowledge, I give this power into his keeping, and those who have shared his counsels and executed his commands in the past, will in the future assist him as the Supreme Council, which will form the ultimate tribunal to which the disputes of nations will henceforth be submitted, instead of to the barbarous and bloody arbitration of battle.

"No such power has ever been delivered into the hands of a single body of men before, but those who will hold it have been well tried, and they may be trusted to wield it without pride and without selfishness, the twin curses that have hitherto afflicted the divided nations of the earth, because, with the fate of humanity in their hands, and the wealth of earth at their disposal, it will be impossible to tempt them with bribes, either of riches or power, from the plain course of duty which will lie before them."

As Natas finished speaking he signed with his hand to Tremayne, who rose in his place and briefly addressed the assembly:

"I and those who will share it with me accept alike the power and the responsibility—not of choice but rather because we are convinced that the interests of humanity demand that we should do so. Those interests have too long been the sport of kings and their courtiers, and of those who have seen in selfish profit and aggrandisement the only ends of life worth living for.

"Under the pretences of furthering civilisation and progress and maintaining what they have been pleased to call law and order, they have perpetrated countless crimes of oppression, cruelty, and extortion, and we are determined that this shall have an end.

"Henceforth, so far as we can ensure it, the world shall be ruled not by the selfishness of individuals, or the ambitions of nations, but in accordance with the everlasting and immutable principles of truth and justice, which have hitherto been burlesqued alike by despots on their thrones

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and by political partisans in the senates of so-called democratic countries.

"To-morrow, at mid-day in this place, the chief rulers of Europe will meet us, and our intentions will be further explained. And now before we separate to go about the rest of the business of the day, let us, as is fitting, give due thanks to Him Who has given us the victory."

He ceased speaking, but remained standing; the same instant the organ of the cathedral pealed out the opening notes of the familiar Normanton Chant, and all those at the table, saving Natas, rose to their feet. Then Natasha's voice soared clear and strong above the organ notes, singing the first line of the chant:

"The strain upraise of joy and praise!"

And as she ceased, the swell of the organ rolled out and a mighty chorus of hallelujahs burst by one consent from the lips of the vast congregation, filling the huge cathedral and flowing out from its now wide-open doors until it was caught up and echoed by the thousands who thronged the churchyard and the streets leading into it.

As this died away Radna sang the second line, and so the Psalm of Praise was sung through, as it were, in strophe and anti-strophe, interspersed with the jubilant hallelujahs of the multitude who were celebrating the greatest victory that had ever been won on earth.

That night the inhabitants of the delivered city gave themselves up to such revelry and rejoicing as had never been seen or heard in London since it foundation. The streets and squares blazed with lights and resounded with the songs and cheerings of a people delivered from an impending catastrophe which had bidden fair to overwhelm it in ruin, and bring upon it calamities which would have been felt for generations.

While these events had been in progress three squadrons of air-ships had been speeding to Petersburg, Vienna, and Rome. Three vessels had been dispatched to each city, and the instructions of those in command of the squadrons were to bring the German Emperor, the Emperor of Austria, and the King of Italy to London.

The news of the defeat of the League had preceded them by telegraph, and all three monarchs willingly obeyed the summons which they carried to attend a conference for the ordering of the affairs of Europe.

The German Emperor was at once released from his captivity, although only under a threat of the destruction of the city by the air-ships, for the Grand Duke Vladimir, who ruled at Petersburg as deputy of the Tsar, had at first refused to believe the astounding story of the defeat of his brother and the destruction of his army. The terrible achievements of the air-ships were, however, too well and too certainly known to permit of resistance by force, and so the Kaiser was released, and made his first aerial voyage from Petersburg to London, arriving there at ten o'clock on the evening of the 8th, in the midst of the jubilations of the rejoicing city.

The King of England had sent a despatch to the Emperor of Austria inviting him to the Conference, and General Cosensz had sent a similar one to the King of Italy, and so there had been no difficulty about their coming. At mid-day on the ninth the Conference was opened in St. Paul's, which was the only public building left intact in London capable of containing the vast audience that was present, an audience composed of men of every race and language in Europe.

Natas was absent, and Tremayne occupied his seat in the centre of the table; the other members of the Inner Circle, now composing the Supreme Council of the Federation, were present, with the exception of Natasha, Radna, and Anna Ornovsky, and the other seats at the table were occupied by the monarchs to whom the purposes of the conference had been explained earlier in the day. France was represented in the person of General le Gallifet.

The body of the cathedral was filled to overflowing, with the exception of an open space kept round the table by the Federation guards.

The proceedings commenced with a brief but impressive religious service conducted by the Primate of England, who ended it with a short but earnest appeal delivered from the altar steps to those composing the Conference, calling upon them to conduct their deliberations with justice and moderation, and reminding them of the millions who were waiting in other parts of Europe for the blessings of peace and prosperity which it was now in their power to confer upon them.

As the Archbishop concluded the prayer for the blessing of Heaven upon their deliberations with which he ended his address, Tremayne, after a few moments of silence, rose in his place and, speaking in clear, impressive tones, began as follows:

"Your majesties have been called together to hear the statement of the practical issues of the conflict which has been decided between the armies of the Federation of the Anglo-Saxon peoples and those of the late Franco-Slavonian League.

"Into the motives which led myself and those who have acted with me to take the part which we have done in this tremendous struggle, there is now no need for me to enter. It is rather with results than with motives that we have to deal, and those results may be very briefly stated.

"We have demonstrated on the field of battle that we hold in our hands means of destruction, against which it is absolutely impossible for any army, fortress, or fleet, to compete with the slightest hope of victory; and more than this, we are in command of the largest organised army and fleet now on land or sea. We have been compelled by the necessities of the case to use our powers unsparingly up to a certain point. That we have not used them beyond that point, as we might have done, to enslave the world, is the best proof that I can give of the honesty of our purposes with regard to the future.

"But it must never be forgotten that those powers remain with us, and can be invoked afresh should necessity ever arise. It is not our purpose to enter upon a war of conquest, or upon a series of internal revolutions in the different countries of Europe, the issue of which might be the subversion of all order, and the necessity for universal conquest on our part in order to restore it.

"With two exceptions the internal affairs of all the nations of Europe, saving only Russia, which for the present we shall govern directly, will be left undisturbed. The present tenure of land will be abolished, and the only rights to its possession that will be recognised will be occupation and cultivation. Experience has shown that the holding of land for mere purposes of luxury or speculative profit leads to untold injustices to the general population of a country. The land on which cities and towns are built will henceforth belong to the municipalities, and the rents of the buildings will be paid in lieu of taxation.

"The other exception is even more important than this. We have waged war in order that it may be waged no more, and we are determined that it shall now cease for ever. The people of the various nations have no interest in warfare. It has been nothing but an affliction and a curse to them, and we are convinced that if one generation grows up without drawing the sword, it will never be drawn again as long as men remain upon the earth.

"All existing fortifications will at once be destroyed, standing armies will be disbanded, and all the war-ships in the world, which cannot be used for peaceful purposes, will be sent to the bottom of the deepest part of the ocean.

"For the maintenance of peace and order each nation will support a body of police in which all citizens between the ages of twenty and forty will serve in rotation, and this police will be under the control, first of the Sovereign and Parliament of the country, and ultimately of an International Board, which will sit once a year in each of the

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capitals of Europe in turn, and from whose decision there will be no appeal.

"The possession of weapons of warfare, save by the members of this force, will be forbidden under penalty of death, as we shall pre-suppose that no man can possess such weapons save with intent to kill, and all killing, save execution for murder, will henceforth be treated as murder.

"Declaration of war by one country upon another will be held to be a national crime, and, should such an event ever occur, the forces of the Anglo-Saxon Federation will be at once armed by authority of the Supreme Council, and the guilty nation will be crushed and its territories will be divided amongst its neighbours.

"Such are the broad outlines of the course which we intend to pursue, and all I have now to do is to commend them to your earnest consideration in the name of those over whom you are the constituted rulers."

As the President of the Federation sat down the German Emperor rose and said in a tone which showed that he had heard the speech with but little satisfaction:

"From what we have heard it would seem that the Federation of the Anglo-Saxon peoples considers itself as having conquered the world, and as being, therefore, in a position to dictate terms to all the peoples of the earth. Am I correct in this supposition?"

Tremayne bowed in silence, and he continued:

"But this amounts to the destruction of the liberties of all peoples who are not of the Anglo-Saxon race. It seems impossible to me to believe that free-born men who have won their liberty upon the battle-field will ever consent to submit to a despotism such as this. What if they refuse to do so?"

Tremayne was on his feet in an instant. He turned half round and faced the Kaiser with a frown on his brow and an ominous gleam in his eyes:

"Your Majesty of Germany may call it a despotism if you choose, but remember that it is a despotism of peace and not of war, and that it affects only those who would be peace-breakers and drawers of the sword upon their fellow-creatures.

"I regret that you have made it necessary for me to remind you that we have conquered your conquerors, and that the despotism from which we have delivered the nations of Europe would infallibly have been ten thousand times worse than that which you are pleased to miscall by the name.

"You deplore the loss of the right and the power to draw the sword one upon another. Well, now, take that right back again for the last time! Say here, and now, that you will not acknowledge the supremacy of the Council of the Federation, and take the consequences.

"Our soldiers are still in the field, our aerial fleet is still in the air, and our sea navy is under steam. But, remember, if you appeal to the sword it shall be with you as it was with Alexander Romanoff and the Russian force which invaded England. We have annihilated the army to a man, and exiled the Autocrat for life. Choose now, peace or war, and let those who would choose war with you take their stand beside you, and we will fight another Armageddon."

The pregnant and pitiless words brought the Kaiser to his senses in an instant. He remembered that his army was destroyed, his strongest fortress dismantled, his treasury empty, and the manhood of his country decimated. He turned white to his lips, and sank back into his chair, covered his face with his hands, and sobbed aloud. And so ended the last and only protest made by the spirit of militarism against the new despotism of peace.

One by one the monarchs now rose in their places, bowed to the inevitable, and gave their informal adherence to the new order of things. General le Gallifet came last. When

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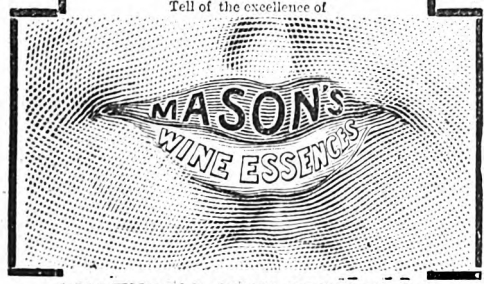

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he had affixed his signature to the written undertaking of allegiance which they had all signed, he said, speaking in French:

"I was born and bred a soldier, and my life has been passed either in warfare or the study of it. I have now drawn the sword for the last time, save to defend France from invasion. I have seen enough of modern war, or, as I should rather call it, murder by machinery, for such it only is now.

"They spoke truly who prophesied that the solution of the problem of aerial navigation would make war impossible. It has made it impossible, because it has made it too unspeakably horrible for humanity to tolerate.

"In token of the honesty of my belief I ask now that France and Germany shall bury their long blood-feud on their last battlefield, and in the persons of his German Majesty and myself shake hands in the presence of this company as a pledge of national forgiveness and perpetual peace."

As he ceased speaking, he turned and held out his hand to the Kaiser. All eyes were turned on William II. to see how he would receive this appeal. For a moment he hesitated, then his manhood and chivalry conquered his pride and national prejudice, and amidst the cheers of the great assembly, he grasped the outstretched hand of his hereditary enemy, saying in a voice broken by emotion:

"So be it. Since the sword is broken for ever, let us forget that we have been enemies, and remember only that we are neighbours."

This ended the Conference. From St. Paul's those who had composed it went to Buckingham Palace, in the grounds of which the aerial fleet was reposing on the lawns under a strong guard of Federation soldiers. Here they embarked, and were borne swiftly through the air to Windsor Castle, where they dined amicably together as friends and guests of the King of England, and after dinner discussed far on into the night the details of the new European Constitution which was to be drawn up and formally ratified within the next few days.

(*To be continued.*)

A MANCHESTER man went into a trance the other day, and did not come out of it until the gas-collector went away.

MRS. WALKER: "I don't see why the doctors recommend bicycle riding. If it makes people healthier, it is a loss to the doctors."

Mr. Walker: "I know; but they calculate that one sound, healthy rider will disable at least five pedestrians per week."

TEDDY: "I wish I hadn't licked Jimmy Brown this morning."

Mamma: "You see now how wrong it was, don't you, dear?"

Teddy: "Yes, 'cause I didn't know till dinner time that he was going to have a party."

BILDAD: "What are you looking so sad about, old man?"

Ichabod: "I'm not feeling well, and I think I'll have to stick to business all the year round."

Bildad: "Why don't you take a holiday?"

Ichabod: "That's just it; I'm not well enough to stand it."

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The Editor reserves the right to close this competition at a day's notice.

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Day..... *Hour*.....

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The Brain Gymnasium.

On this page, under the title, "The Brain Gymnasium," appear each week a series of puzzles calculated to occupy the attention of the competitors, with interest and profit to themselves, during the long winter evenings. Many of the tasks set will be comparatively easy of solution, while others will be designed with a view to taxing the abilities of the most proficient in this direction.

In these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the sender of the greatest number of correct solutions, and to the senders of the ten next highest number of correct ones will be presented either one of our silver-plated pencil cases or a copy of a popular six-shilling novel. Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, Short Stories, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by Monday, February 19th, 1900.

No. 40.

Take an English word, reverse the first syllable, place it after the second, and leave the name of a famous modern painter.

No. 41.

What English word is it, the first two letters of which signify a man, the first three a woman, the first four a great man, and the whole a great woman.

No. 42.

I am a word of ten letters, which is to be divided into two parts. To make my first, you should be my second, and if you are my second, and yet never make my first, you must be my whole.

No. 43.

The centrals of the names of the following, together with a consonant, will, when arranged in their proper order, give the name of a great English poet:

A river in Italy.
A town in Suffolk.
A river in Scotland.
A town in Ceylon.

No. 44.

The longest line of asterisks represents the name by which a well-known English town is known, and the ten vertical rows represent complete words formed with the letters contained in it. The letters used in the whole are as follows:

C C C C I I I I I L L L L N N
N O O O O O O O O O O P P P
P P P S S S T T T T T T

No. 45.

A A A A
A A A A
E E E G G L L L
O O O
R R S S S
S S S S

Rearrange the above letters so that two word squares are formed, the connecting word of which is a "thoroughfare."

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Nos. 16 to 20.

No. 16.—First Prize. Ten shillings has been awarded to Mr. G. L. Stickels, of 14 Marshall Street, Folkestone.

A copy of "Rev. Annabel Lee," by Robert Buchanan, to W. H. Robinson, Taunton; George Gordon, Kilburn, N.W.; M. van Praagh, Finchley Road, N.W.; George Brown, Possilpark, Glasgow; Miss M. Dingle, St. Margarets, Dublin.

No. 17.—First Prize. Ten shillings has been awarded to John McAra Boyd, of 32 Stevenson Drive, Langside, Glasgow.

A silver plated pencil-case has been sent to each of the following:

C. A. Cramphorn, Leytonstone, N.E.; Miss F. Brett, Old Kent Road, S.E.; G. Beaver, Nunhead, S.E.; Jas. Mitchell, Musselburgh; J. Edwards, Clerkenwell Road, E.C.

No. 18.—First Prize. Ten shillings has been awarded to Jas. Thain, of Longfellow House, 29A Palmerston Road, Bowes Park, N.

A copy of "Lady Jezebel," by Fergus Hume, to:

H. Woodfield, Tirebrook, Liverpool; A. R. Stewart, Edinburgh; Mrs. Ayers, Leytonstone, E.; H. Wellard, Tunbridge Wells; Miss M. Connell, Hertford.

No. 19.—First Prize. Ten shillings has been awarded to M. Kendrick, of Warwick House, Bournemouth.

A silver plated pencil-case to each of the following:

W. P. Gosling, Bournemouth West; Miss G. Thorpe, Eastbourne; A. Keniston, Blandford, Dorset; J. White, Liverpool; F. C. Kettle, Pimlico, S.W.

No. 20.—First Prize. Ten shillings has been awarded to Mr. A. J. Anderson, of 31 Hova Villas, Hove, Sussex.

A copy of "Master Key," by Florence Warden, to:

F. Mannion, Ladbroke Grove, W.; Jas. Matthews, Chiswick, W.; D. Ryan, Dublin; W. F. Broad, Fulham, S.W.; W. C. Lee, Stockport.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES.

January 27th, 1900.

No. 21 — **Saturn.**
Trap.
Elephant.
Prince.
Nile.
Ibex.
Alligator.
Kite.

No. 22. — **Photograph: Goat, tag, root, o t.**

No. 23. — **"This England never did or never shall lie at the proud foot of a conqueror."—King John, Act 5, Sc. 7.**

No. 24. — **FIRST CATCH YOUR HARE THEN COOK IT.**

No. 25. — **IN-IT-I-AT-I-ON.**

No. 26. — **Turner. Landseer. Reynolds.**

No. 27. — **"This above all—to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man."
Hamlet, Act 1, Sc. 3.**

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Taken from the "People's Journal," Jan. 20th, 1900.

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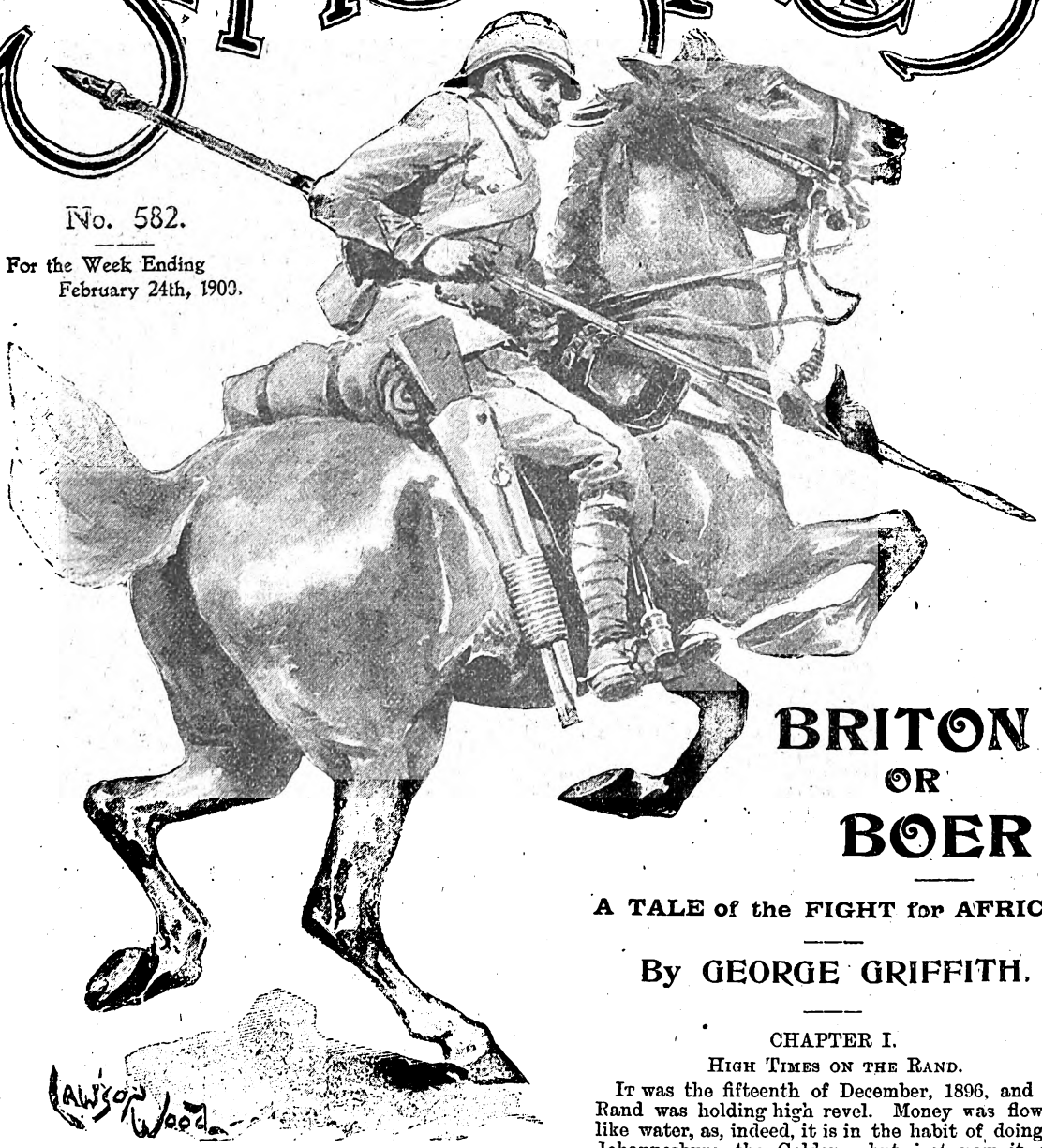
No. 582.

For the Week Ending
February 24th, 1900.



BRITON OR BOER?

A TALE of the FIGHT for AFRICA

By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

CHAPTER I.

High Times on the Rand.

It was the fifteenth of December, 1896, and the Rand was holding high revel. Money was flowing like water, as, indeed, it is in the habit of doing in Johannesburg the Golden; but just now it was flowing even more freely than ever, mostly in the form of champagne at twenty-five and thirty shillings a bottle, and whisky and soda at eighteen-pence a time

The New Ophir seemed, in fact, to have gone upon a general spree. Commissioner Street was a scene of intermittent revelry from end to end. Everybody who met anybody else with whom he was ever so slightly acquainted shook hands effusively, and promptly adjourned with him to the nearest bar to have a drink and discuss the great, good news, and drink the Old Man's jolly good health.

From the bar of the Rand Club to the lowest canteen down along the Reef, more liquor was being passed over the counter to the minute than had ever passed before, even when Johannesburg was booming its best. More than this, too, the bars witnessed the strange spectacle of well-dressed, carefully-groomed Outlanders—Englishmen, Americans, and Colonials, hobnobbing with big, ill-clad, shaggy-bearded Boers, shaking hands with them, clapping them on

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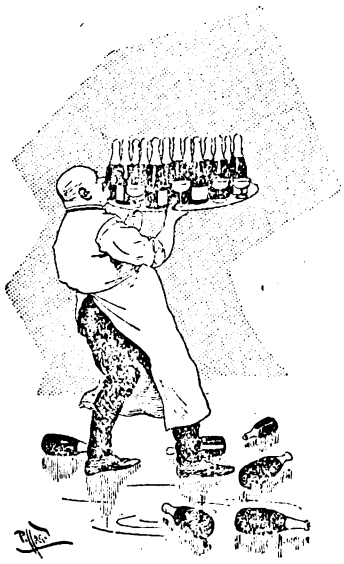
the back, and clinking glasses just as though no such thing as the Reform Committee or the Jameson Raid had ever been heard of.

Everybody was the best of friends with everybody else, not an Outlander had a bad word even for Dr. Leyds and the Hollander Ring of monopolists, concessionaires and official peculators which revolved about him.

The space between the Chains was the scene of better and brisker business than had ever been known before, even at the best of times, and men of millions were walking about smiling like the most guileless of seraphs, and giving good things away to all and sundry with a freedom and urbanity that would have made an unsophisticated stranger believe that their principal object in heaping up riches was to have the satisfaction of bestowing a portion of them upon other people.



No one who knew Johannesburg ever so slightly would for a moment dream that such a hard-headed and business-like community would go off into such a fit of genial hysterics as this without adequate cause, and this in the present case was not very far to seek, since everybody was talking about it with a wealth of vocabulary and picturesqueness of expression, even more than usually characteristic of Johannesburg conversation.

To put the matter shortly, the reason for the unrestrained hilarity of the Golden City stood as follows:

Ever since the release of the Reform leaders and the cashing of the little cheques they left behind them when they bade adieu to their gaolers at Pretoria, the President and his government had pursued a policy of conciliation towards the Outlander population which, to the astonishment of the whole world, not only passed the bounds of fairness, but even trenched closely on the borders of generosity. Old offences were forgiven if not forgotten, duties were reduced, taxes had been made lighter, and one or two monopolies had even been abolished; in fact, the Boer lion showed every sign of an honest disposition to lie down with the Outlander lamb without going through the formality of first having the lamb for supper.

And now the climax had been reached and the crowning act of generosity had been accomplished. On the first of December the Volksraad had passed and the Executive had published a decree, duly signed by the President and the Secretary of State, giving the franchise and full burgher rights to every Outlander of full age who had paid his taxes regularly and had owned property to the value of £500 and upwards in the Transvaal for a minimum of three years.

The decree was to come into force on the sixteenth of December (Amajuba Day), and was to be formally proclaimed by the President at the great Annual Independence Festival under the shadow of the monument at Krugersdorp.

There was doubtless a certain amount of irony in the choice of the date, but this was put down to the Boer conception of humour; and as everybody was much too pleased to feel in a critical mood, it was taken as a sort of cumbrous joke such as Oom Paul made when he opened the Jewish Synagogue in Johannesburg with the words: "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I declare this place of worship open!" and smiled at accordingly.

As a matter of fact, no one, saving only a certain strong, silent man far away in the heart of the Northern wilds and a few irreconcilable cavillers who thought that they could see farther through the fog of Pretorian diplomacy than anybody else, was in any humour to find fault with the situation; and the world at large, and the Little Englanders in particular, drew rhetorical pictures of the good old President in which his grey hairs seemed to be already shining in the light of a halo of saintship.

A chorus of his admirers all the world over arose, asking—nay, almost demanding—that the complete independence of the Transvaal should be acknowledged by the Paramount Power in return for this great act of forgiveness and generosity, and that Great Britain should withdraw the barrier which she had placed between the Boer Republic and its legitimate desire for free access to the sea.

And now, on the eve of Amajuba Day the Rand was celebrating the near approach of its political emancipation with a luxuriant magnificence worthy of a city of millionaires. There was racing on the racecourse; an athletic tournament, followed by a huge garden-party given by the Wanderers' Club, in Kruger's Park; the theatre and the music halls were thrown open free for the night by Mr. Barney Barnato, who bought all the seats in them, and then, in the formula of his early profession, invited the public to "walk up."

Mr. J. B. Robinson arranged for a special service of free trains between Pretoria and Johannesburg. Mr. Alfred Beit, to whom the olive branch of forgiveness had also been extended, capped this by running specials for three days at his own expense from Cape Town and Kimberley. Mr. Solly Joel arranged for a service from Port Elizabeth and Natal, whereupon Mr. Barnato, thinking he was getting left behind, quietly sent a circular-note round the hotels and bars to the effect that he would pay the drink bill of Johannesburg for the evening, and there were those who said that this proved to be the biggest order of all.

The day's festivities, so far as the *élite* of the Rand society and the *haut ton* of Pretoria were concerned, wound up with a ball at the Rand Club, the like of which, for brilliancy and splendour, had never been seen in South Africa before.

The club house at the corner of Commissioner Street and Loveday Street came as near to being a roofed-in, walled-off section of Paradise as unlimited money and a somewhat florid taste could make it. Everyone who was anyone was there, saving only the good President himself, who true to the austere principles which had made him refuse an invitation to a State Ball in England on account of the shocking costumes of the ladies, had sent his young and handsome State Secretary to represent him, while he remained to smoke many pipes and indulge in a quiet orgy on coffee on the stoep of his house in Pretoria, now and then exchanging a phrase of ponderous endearment or elphantine sarcasm on the pomps and vanities of the wicked world with Tant' Sanna, and anon lapsing into silent contemplation of great things to come.

Certainly he could have chosen no more acceptable substitute than Doctor Cornelius Leyds, especially in the eyes of the ladies who, with the richness of their costumes, the splendour of their jewels, and in some cases the grace of their forms and the beauty of their faces, gave their chief charm to the gorgeous rooms of the Rand Club.

So far at least as the ladies were concerned—and that after all was everything—he was the lion of the evening. Rumour had credited him, perhaps justly, with having completely abandoned his old hostility to his fellow Outlanders, and with having exerted all his great influence with the President and the Volksraad to secure the generous concession over which Johannesburg was now rejoicing.

And yet, if the truth must be told, the handsome young

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Everybody was the best of friends with everybody else.

Secretary had not been a couple of hours in the midst of what not a single newspaper on the Rand could refrain the next morning from calling "the festive scene," before he began to feel a little tired of it.

There was altogether too much gorgeousness to suit his really refined tastes. The scent of the flowers was too strongly blended with artificial perfumes. Too many of the women were in one sense over, and in another, underdressed. There was a lack of genuineness about too many of the complexions. There was too much jewellery and too little taste to please his fastidious judgment. Most of the men's voices were too loud and their diamond studs too big;

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and altogether there was an aggressive assertion of mere crude wealth that jarred upon him and set him already wishing for the hour at which he could decently take his leave.

He had been standing for some minutes near the top of the big dining saloon which was being used as a ballroom, exchanging views and criticisms on the more interesting personalities of the company with a short, sturdily-built man with a powerful head and a round, good-natured face, lit up by a pair of bright, clever eyes, who looked shorter than he really was in comparison with the Secretary's tall and athletic figure.

He wore several orders on his left breast, and the collar and cross of the Order of Jesus lay snugly on the snowy expanse of his well-glazed shirt-front. This was Baron de Matalha, sometime Portuguese Ambassador, though an Englishman by birth, and one of the astutest diplomatists between the Cape and the Zambesi.

It was getting on towards midnight when the Secretary, smothering a yawn, chanced in the act of doing so to look up towards the door. It happened also at the same moment that the heavy purple velvet curtains which hung over the doorway were drawn aside and a woman entered leaning on the arm of a man.

The Secretary had seen the same thing happen a score of times within the last few minutes, and had hardly noticed it, but now all his *ennui* vanished in the instant of the first glance, his eye brightened, and a faint flush sprang into his somewhat sallow cheeks. He caught his companion by the arm and said with an eagerness which he took no trouble to conceal:

"Tell me, Baron—you know everybody—who is that? The girl I mean. The man is only interesting because he seems to be her father."

The Baron looked up half quizzically, and with a twinkle in his eyes, for none knew better than he the naturally masculine weakness of Mr. Secretary Leyds for a pretty face, and he did not see why it might not be indulged with no thought of disloyalty to Madame la Secretaire, who, as it happened, was at present away on a six months' tour in Holland and Germany. He rubbed his plump hands softly together, then he said with a quiet little chuckle running through his tones:

"Ah, my dear Doctor, I thought that a look upon the most beautiful face in South Africa would suffice to charm away the boredom, which I see this over-dressed, over-jewelled assembly has been inflicting upon you. I took the liberty of arranging her coming as a little surprise for you just about now, as I knew that an hour or so of this sort of thing would be enough to tire you."

"Ah, then you do know them?" said the Secretary as eagerly as before. "So of course you can introduce me. Who are they?"

"The old gentleman is Prince Paul Regna, a Polish nobleman of very old family, and, curiously enough for a Pole, very considerable fortune. The air of Russian-Poland does not agree with him just now, and he is travelling for his health round the world. In fact, if his fortune were not invested in Paris, he might not have the means of travelling."

"Yes, yes, my dear Baron," said the Secretary with some little impatience. "That's all right, but who is the lady? His daughter or his——"

"No, no, my dear Doctor," said the Baron with one of his blandest smiles. "Not his wife. But excuse me just a moment and you shall know, as I see you wish to know."

With that the Baron trotted off down the room to meet the new comers. The Secretary saw him salute them with his courtliest bow, and then he turned, and the three came towards him, the lady walking in the middle.

Experienced, nay, one might almost say hardened, as the Secretary was, something told him, vaguely yet unmistakably, that a new experience, nay, perhaps, even a crisis was about to come into his life. The ballroom with its gorgeous decorations, the sheen of splendid costumes, and the glitter of multitudinous jewels faded into an obscure blur which he thought of afterwards as a nebula in the sky with one brilliant star shining through the midst of it.

The loud hum of conversation, which had grown louder as the trio walked up the room towards him, died down to a faint, distant murmur. He saw and heard but two things with distinctness—one was the loveliest face he had ever looked upon, lit up by a great pair of liquid grey-blue eyes and crowned with thick coils of bright gold-brown hair, worn in complete and happy defiance of the ruling fashion, and the other was the little Baron's smoothest tone saying:

"The Princess Vavara Regna, who has expressly desired to be introduced not only to His Honour's representative, but also to the State Secretary."

He bowed in acknowledgment of the most graceful salutation he had ever seen a woman make, and murmured something, for the awkwardness and indistinctness of which he could afterwards have kicked himself; and then through the re-awakening buzz of conversation about him he heard a low, sweet, clear voice saying in the most exquisitely pronounced English—the language in which the Baron had made the introductions:

"If the Baron has told you anything about us you will understand, Mr. Secretary how it pleases us to make the acquaintance of one who has done so much for the cause of justice and freedom as you have."

If the tones had been less sweet or less even, or if the lovely eyes had not looked up to him with the light of such a perfect innocence shining in them, the Secretary might well have suspected some lurking irony beneath the compliment. But even had he done so, the suspicion would have vanished the next instant, for the Princess, with a delightfully frank defiance of conventionality, put out a little ungloved hand, which lay in his just for an instant, and then was gently and quickly withdrawn. Yet in that instant it somehow seemed to him that here, at the turning point of his political career, and on the eve of the greatest *coup* that had ever been planned in South Africa, his fate had all unexpectedly come to him, though he was naturally far from dreaming that the little hand whose warmth and softness was still setting his nerves a-tingle was destined to hold many more fates than his in its gentle yet pitiless grasp.

CHAPTER II.

An Experiment in Telegraphy.

Mr. Secretary Leyds never had any very clear idea as to how the next few minutes after his introduction to the Princess Vavara passed.

He shook hands with the Prince, who was a tall, sparely built man a little on the wrong side of fifty. His features were rather sharp in spite of their distinctly aristocratic moulding, his eyes were brilliant grey looking out under dark, straight brows, and his thick, carefully-trimmed hair seemed to have been slowly grizzling for some years, though

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his moustache and *favourite* were still dark with an apparently natural hue. His manner was a combination of repressed energy, perpetual alertness, and the easy repose of a man of perfect breeding and the best social experience.

But the Baron, like the astute and considerate diplomatist that he was, soon managed to monopolise the Prince's attention, leaving the Secretary free for pleasanter converse. Then the strains of an inviting waltz came floating up the room. The Princess, whether instinctively or by intention, began to mechanically draw her glove on, the usual words were said, and then the Secretary's arm stole round the slimmest, supplest waist that it had ever encircled, and he seemed to glide away into Paradise in the most fitting companionship that he could have chosen.

Dancing to perfection was one of his many accomplishments, and by no means the least useful of them, and now for the first time since he had left Berlin he had a partner worthy of him.

Naturally they had not gone very far before a good many eyes, some admiring and some perhaps a trifle envious, were turned upon them. He, quite apart from his official position, was undeniably the handsomest and most distinguished man in the company, and she was by far the most beautiful woman, but even apart from her beauty she could still have been singled out at a glance from all the other women in the room.

Her dress was as perfect in its taste as it was simple in its style, and while the others were mostly loaded with gold and blazing with jewels, she wore only a broad, old-fashioned looking collarette of dull gold round her throat, and a single big straw-coloured diamond which flashed like a golden star out of the darker haze of her hair.

The minutes of the waltz passed like a dream to him, and when it was over it seemed he had only really waltzed once in his life. But then into the midst of the pleasant half-reverie in which he seemed to have been living since he shook hands with her there came the imperative summons of sterner things. It was already after twelve and before morning he had a good deal to do—more indeed than he had ever done in his life before, for on the work of those few hours depended the making or marring of the *coup* which, as he believed, was to make or mar him.

"I didn't know how short the distance was between the Transvaal and Paradise until we began that waltz," he said, when the music had died away and her hand was resting on his arm. "And now, alas, I must get back to earth and the things that are earthy."

"That was very prettily put, Mr. Secretary," she said, with a quick upward look and an almost imperceptible laugh running through her tone, "quite the very reverse of what I should have expected in a country that I had been led to believe had hardly emerged from barbarism and was chiefly inhabited by half-savage farmers, who scarcely ever washed and always went to bed with their clothes on."

"Ah! that is only the English opinion of the Republic. You musn't take that as worth very much."

"Oh, I am beginning to learn that already, although I have only been here a day or two. Those English who want the world for their own have not forgiven Amajuba yet, any more than the French have forgiven Waterloo."

"England has not had her Waterloo in South Africa yet, Princess," said the Secretary, looking down at the lovely face that was suddenly turned up to his. There was an unconscious emphasis on the "yet" and a thrill of angry vibration running through the brief pregnant sentence which startled her and brought a look of innocent inquiry into her eyes.

"I should very much like to commit the indiscretion of asking you what you mean," she said with a sweet softness which the Secretary instinctively felt to be a trifle dangerous. "But from what you said just now I see that our first dance has, for the time being, been our last. We, too, must be thinking of getting back to Pretoria if we can manage to get a place in a train, for we have had rather a tiring day. I am an inveterate sightseer, you know, and I might never again have the chance of seeing Johannesburg *en fête*. We only really came in for half-an-hour or so to see the finale and to give the Baron a chance or redeeming his promise to introduce us to his Honour's representative—and the State Secretary."

"And in doing so you have given the Baron an opportunity of making me his debtor for life. And so you are staying at Pretoria? I am delighted to hear it because you will be safer—I mean, of course, more quiet and more comfortably situated than you could be here, and besides it enables me to do just a little trifle towards repaying you for the pleasure of that delightful waltz by offering you a compartment in my special train. It leaves at half-past twelve. Will that be too early for you?"

"That is really more than kind of you," she said, looking up at him again with a smile that would have repaid a hundred such services, "but really I don't think we ought to trespass so far on so short an acquaintance."

"It has lasted years already," said the Secretary with half unconscious impetuosity. "At least, it seems so to me. As for trespass it is out of the question. May I ask where you are staying at Pretoria?"

He was half afraid that the Princess might have resented the very obvious warmth of his tone, and that he was going to get a gentle but effectual snub, but there was no shadow of displeasure in the frank, innocent eyes that looked up into his, nor any note of anger in her voice as she replied:

"We are staying at the Grand, and my window is nearly opposite the window of that room in the Government Building where so many things must have happened within the last twelve months or so.

"Of course I don't know anything about politics; it is better not to do so in my country, but still I must confess that when I saw the lights there last night before I went to bed, I had a distinct desire for a sort of Röntgen-ray telescope that would enable me to see through the blind or the wall and a telephone or something that would have told me what you were all talking about. The walls of that room must have heard a good many things that Mr. Chamberlain, for instance, would have liked to hear over yonder in London."

As she said this she noticed an absolute change come over the Secretary's face. The frank, pleasant expression vanished in an instant, though only for an instant, and it became dark, saturnine, and almost repulsive. Then, as quickly as it had come, the cloud passed away and he said:

"I see you have the ordinary idea of statemanship-Princess. All plotting and counter-plotting, nations waylaying nations, as it were, in the dark, and Ministers laying pitfalls for other Ministers as it used to be a hundred years ago. I can assure you it is a much more innocent and commonplace business nowadays, especially since Mr. Chamberlain taught us how to play the game of Diplomacy with the cards on the table. But come, you have not told me whether I may have the pleasure of taking you to Pretoria or not."

"I must leave that to papa," she said. "Suppose we go and ask him."

There was the gentlest possible emphasis on the "we," barely perceptible and yet just enough to convey a shadowy suggestion of companionship which the Secretary found very pleasant.

The Prince, after a little courtly demurring, accepted the really serviceable offer, and after the Baron had amused himself by making a very few and very brief introductions among his own particular circle, and thereby raising an appreciable amount of envy and general uncharitableness in the souls of many outside that circle, the Secretary's carriage was announced and a few minutes later the four were on their way to the Park station.

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The special consisted only of an engine, a compartmented saloon, and a brake van, and it traversed the forty-six miles in the record time of an hour and ten minutes. When it pulled up at Pretoria platform the Princess was beginning to think that the Secretary had not been very far wrong in what he had said about the length of their acquaintanceship. They parted at the station after having made arrangements at the Secretary's earnest insistence to go and see the great Independence Gathering at Krugersdorp the next day in the President's special train.

The Prince and Princess drove straight to the hotel; the Baron took a Cape cart to his own chambers; and the Secretary drove off in his neat little brougham to the house he had just built for himself overlooking the park.

But when he got there the brougham only waited for a few minutes, during which he went in and came out again with a little locked leather satchel in his hand; then he drove rapidly down to the Government Building, and dismissed his carriage under the porch.

When the Prince and Princess reached the hotel they went straight upstairs to the Prince's room. This was No. 47, and opened out on to the balcony which runs round the two sides of the building. Immediately opposite is the Government Building, and almost in a straight line from the window is the top of the side entrance from which the private Government wires cross the street to a telegraph-pole about four yards from the balcony.

The Prince knocked softly at the door, which was rather a singular thing for him to do, seeing that it was his own room. The door was open by a clean-shaven young man, who, from his dress, seemed to be something between a confidential servant and a secretary. He bowed low as they entered and then locked the door behind them.

"Have you made the preparations, Dmitri?" the Prince said in Russian.

"Yes, Nobleness, everything is prepared. The wire works excellently, and I have already taken a message by way of trial. It is to the terminus at Malmani desiring repetition of news from Mafeking. Here is the translation of it."

"Very good," said the Prince. "And you have sent it on?"

"Yes, Nobleness, nearly half an hour ago. The reply has not come yet. I have been waiting for it."

"Very good again; then we are in time to receive it," said the Princess with one of her prettiest smiles, "before we pass it on to our friend the Secretary across the road. What a really charming man he is, and how very angry he would be with me if he only knew!"

As she said this she went to what looked like, and in fact was a type-writer case standing on the table near the window. She lifted it up and disclosed, instead of a type-writer, two dainty little telegraph instruments, a receiver and a transmitter, and from each of these a fine insulated electric thread ran from the table through the open window over the rail of the balcony.

From there one of them ran up to the private Government wires, which it was wound once completely round, and the other was similarly involved with the wires on the other side of the telegraph-post. She glanced over to the lighted windows of the Executive Chamber with a pretty smile on her lips and a wicked, laughing look in her eyes. Then she said:

"Put the lights out, Dmitri, and make the coffee," and sat down to the instruments. Dmitri extinguished two of the three lamps that were burning in the room; the third was a little lamp completely shaded save where it threw a narrow fan of light on the table in front of the operator. From the street there was no more glow apparent in the windows than might have come from a shaded nightlight.

The hours came and went in silence broken only by the soft clicking of the instruments and an occasional gently-spoken word or two as sheet after sheet of cypher was passed from the Princess to her father for translation according to the code which lay before him as he sat beside her at the table.

Then as the clock of the Government House chimed half-past four, the lights in the Executive Chamber went out, and Mr. Secretary Leyds, President Kruger, and Vice-President Joubert, went home to bed, all perhaps to dream dreams of coming greatness, and the first possibly to mingle other and fairer visions with them in happy ignorance of the fact that an exact copy of every message that had been dispatched from and received in the Executive Chamber during the night lay under the pillow of the lovely Polish exile whose eyes might have lent an added brightness to the golden prospect of his illimitable ambition, but for the existence of the demure little Dutchwoman whom he had sent away to her home on the banks of the Y in view of the trouble to come.

By the time it was light enough to have seen them from the street the almost invisible wires had vanished, and as soon as the telegraph office was open Dmitri went across the square and despatched a message to Mr. Michael Ostroff at the Central Hotel, Lorenço Marquez, requesting that his master the Prince's luggage might be sent up without delay.

Within a couple of hours from the despatch of this message Mr. Michael Ostroff went on board a smart looking little steam yacht which lay a couple of hundred yards from the end of the jetty, and steamed straight out to sea, past Inyack Island until the little yacht was lost to the sight of a solitary watcher on Reuben Point in the vast smooth expanse of the Indian Ocean.

CHAPTER III.

Light Words on Weighty Matters.

A couple of hours' sound and dreamless sleep, followed by a bath and the pleasureable occupation of making a most bewitching toilet, sent the Princess Vavara down to breakfast with an excellent appetite and looking as fresh and

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alert as though she had gone to bed with the sun instead of with the dawn and quite prepared for the fatigues of a day of sightseeing, which, as she now knew, would also be a day of no little excitement.

The Prince too, came down looking as though he had passed the night between the sheets instead of sitting at a table translating cypher telegrams, and both were in the excellent spirits that might have been expected to inspire people who had done a thoroughly satisfactory night's work. They had a table to themselves in the big dining-room of the Grand Hotel out of ear-shot of anyone but the waiter, and as he didn't understand a word of Russian they felt justified in conversing with a certain amount of freedom.

"I would give something considerable," said the Princess as he put down her half-emptied cup of the coffee specially brewed by Dmitri in place of the intolerable stuff purveyed by the Transvaal hotel-keepers. "Yes, I really would give a good deal to be in Mr. Chamberlain's room in Downing Street when he gets the news of to-day's proceedings. I wonder whether his eye-glass will fall out when he reads the first telegram, which I suppose will reach him from Petersburg. What a set of fools these English are after all! It makes one wonder how they ever got hold of as much of the earth as they did."

"There is no wonder about that, my child," said the

Prince gravely, looking up rather wearily from a piece of fish that was unusually hard and stringy even for a Pretorian breakfast-table. "It is not the English who are fools; it is the people they are foolish enough to allow to govern them. Despotism is bad, perhaps—one may say that here even, though, this place is the heart of a despotism but where empire-making and keeping are concerned democracy is worse.

"The English, as you have seen in the House of Commons, elect one party to carry on the business of the nation, and another to prevent them doing so, and then some of them elect another party—those little Englanders, as they call them—that, I believe, is the way they spell traitor in England, and then, of course——"

"They proceed to prove the wisest of men wrong in what he said about there being wisdom in the multitude of counsellors," said the Princess, putting down her fish-knife and fork in despair.

"Exactly," said the Prince, handing her the menu. "This fish is intolerable. A continent that can produce no better fish than this hardly deserves a better rule than that of the Boers. Yes, it is really quite pathetic to see what is actually the greatest empire in the world befooled and defied by a little twopenny-halfpenny state like this almost entirely encircled by British possessions. I wonder how far these good Boers would have got with their armaments if the surrounding territory had been Russian instead of British?"

"And I wonder," said the Princess with a little, low laugh, "what sort of an answer our good friend the Secretary would have got if he had sent that divinely impudent message of his to the Nevski Prospekt instead of Downing Street?"

"An instant summons to disarm backed by the dispatch of fifty thousand troops," said the Prince with not a very pleasant smile. "Russia allows no open sores like this in the midst of her dominions. But there—that is somewhat idle talk, for Russia is not cursed with politicians, and so she has never had an Amajuba Hill."

Here the waiter came with the inevitable outlets, and when he had put them down and filled the empty coffee-cups Prince Paul went on in his low, gentle voice:

"Really it is almost pathetic to stand by and watch the beginning of the break-up of the greatest empire the world has ever seen. I am their enemy, as every good Russian must be, and yet I say the sight is pitiful, for the English are a gallant race and have done many wonders in the world; but that was in the old days before telegraphs were invented to paralyse the hands of the real empire-makers."

"They acted on their own judgment and of their own strength, and before the news got home or politicians had time to snarl about it the Empire was richer by a province or two. Nowadays if a little freebooting expedition is arranged news flashes home, orders flash back, and before the expedition has got twenty miles on its road it is disowned and denounced, all aid is cut off, and the result is——"

"Doornkop!" said the Princess softly with one of her sweetest smiles. "Ah, well, we manage these things a little better in Russia, don't we? But still you must confess that this little *coup d'état* of the Secretary has been most exactly planned so far. What a useful man we should make of him in Petersburg."

"Yes," said the Prince with an approving nod. "He is undoubtedly a most capable young man, but you must remember that Uncle Paul and the General are also very able old men. To my mind Leyds has shown his greatest cleverness in making them act upon his views as though they were their own. I consider that to be the acme of statesmanship in a young man."

"And the result?" asked the Princess, putting her elbow on the table and leaning her chin in the palm of her hand. "What is your candid opinion of that?"

"For the present, at least," replied the Prince very deliberately, "there can only be one result, and that is the natural and legitimate consequence of the policy of fatuity tempered with fright which the British Government has been pursuing for the last year or so. The sages of Downing Street have been sitting still and watching the Boers arming throughout the country, and meanwhile they have been apologetically sending two or three hundred men into their own dominions to fight the niggers, apparently thinking that the Boers were arming to do the same.

"They must know, even if they are English politicians, that the vast majority of the Dutch element in the Cape Colony and Natal are not only hopelessly disloyal but exceedingly well armed. At least if they don't know now they will by to-morrow morning, for if Leyds' calculations are correct, as they probably are, there will be between eighty and ninety thousand Boers and Afrikanders under arms soon after sunrise, and I don't suppose that if every English soldier and loyal Colonial who has got arms and can use them, including even the troops who are busy with the niggers in Matabeleland, were to turn out there would be much more than twenty thousand of them, and of these not much more than five or six thousand would be actually trained to fight; while these Boers are always in training for their own peculiar style of warfare. No, I don't think there can be any doubt about the result—at least the immediate result."

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"And after that?" the Princess murmured inquiringly over the edge of her coffee-cup.

"Ah!" said the Prince even more deliberately than before. "That is trenching on a much wider question. You see South Africa, with its gold and diamonds, and its illimitable agricultural possibilities is hardly the kind of country that could be properly left to the tender mercies of such people as these. They will do a useful work in striking the blow that will detach a large portion of the British Empire, for when the English Colossus has lost such a big limb as this it may reasonably be expected to bleed appropriately. But after that—well, we shall see. By the way, I hope Ostroff got that telegram all right. Ah, the idea just struck me at the right time. Here comes Dmitri with what looks like his answer."

He took the brick-red envelope and opened it, then with a glance at the contents he threw the paper across to Vavara and said:

"You see the luggage is coming up at once. That will do, Dmitri, except that we shall want a carriage for the station in fifteen minutes!" Then as Dmitri disappeared he went on: "How very much better that form of communication is than cypher. I wonder what Mr. Secretary Leyds as censor of telegrams would have thought if he could have guessed the meaning of that."

"I would rather know," laughed the Princess, "what our dear and deluded young friend will say, probably under his breath, when he gets the news of the friendly visit of our Eastern squadron to Delagoa Bay just twenty-four hours before the Germans are expected. By-the-way, papa," she went on with the most perfect coolness, "it's a decided pity that this excellent young man is married to a staid Dutch vrow, isn't it, though, of course, that can't be allowed to matter? Do you think he is in a fair way to fall in love with me? I decidedly thought he was last night, but of course that may only be my feminine vanity; you would look on with more dispassionate eyes."

"As far as my own experience takes me," said the Prince with an approving smile, "I should be inclined to say that it won't be very long before you'll have him at your feet. Without any flattery, I have never seen the comedy played better. If I am any judge of male human nature I should describe him as a man who, after several successful comedies in that line, is beginning to play his first tragedy.

"And yet you know, my dear Vavara," he went on with a quizzical note running through his voice and a slight crinkling at the corners of his eyes, "if anything were to happen—which the Fates forfend—to Madame, there are many meaner destinies than might befal the wife of a man—especially a young, handsome, and very able man like Leyds—who will probably before long be President of the United States of South Africa, with practically illimitable wealth at his command, and the means of buying a well-equipped fleet or two, and setting-up in business as a full fledged Republican despot—for I suppose he and his Hollanders will take their cue from South America in the matter of governing."

"If I did not see that you were joking, papa, I should be inclined to be angry," said the Princess with a faint flush on her cheeks and a flash in her eyes. "What!—a Hollander, and a man who would have to become a widower first. Why I would sooner marry an Englishman. Now I think it's time to go and get ready," and with that she rose from her chair and walked towards the door followed by the eyes of every man and woman in the room.

The Prince finished his coffee and went after her with a soft little chuckle at her last words. As he reached the vestibule a Victoria, drawn by a beautiful pair of greys, pulled up at the door, and the next moment the Secretary was standing before him holding out his hand.

Vavara was about half way up the first flight of the broad stairs in front of the door. As she stopped and turned half round to see who the new arrival was, the young Doctor looked up and thought he had never seen a more beautiful picture. She turned and came downstairs again, looking for all the world like a girl who has unexpectedly met the man who may be her lover, and the pretty lips, which a minute or two before had been curled in scorn at the mention of his name, were smiling their sweetest as she answered his morning greeting.

"I am glad to see that your late hours have had no evil effect on you, Princess," he said as his hand closed on hers.

"Late hours?" she said. "We don't call two o'clock very late at home. We don't go to bed with the sun, you know, as your good, simple-minded peasants do here. I can assure you I passed a most excellent night. And you, Mr. Secretary?"

"I never slept better or dreamed pleasanter dreams in my life," he said with more meaning in his tones than his words.

"I am sure you deserve them, whatever they were," she said with a smile of delightful frankness, "for I have no doubt you were working pretty hard over yonder."

"How do you know that?" he said a trifle sharply.

Her eyes met his with a steady glance of perfect innocence and frankness as she replied:

"I saw your shadow on the blind just as I was putting my light out. Now I must go and put my hat on. Our carriage will be here in a minute or two."

"But I have brought mine with the purpose of asking you to make use of it, if you will so far honour it and me."

Vavara shot a quick glance at her father, who instantly took the cue and said:

"Really, Mr. Secretary, you are allowing us to get too deeply into your debt. Still the offer is too good-natured to be refused. Vavara, go and get your things on. One should never keep good horses waiting."

"Or good Secretaries either," the Princess murmured just audibly, as with a pretty half nod towards them, she turned and went up stairs again.

"We have time to divide a small bottle of Goublet, Prince, if you have a mind," said the Secretary. "His Honour won't be coming up for nearly half-an-hour yet, so we can easily be at the station before him. To tell you the truth I shall not be sorry if you will join me, for I had very little sleep last night and plenty of hard work—seeing that all the preparations for to-day were in proper order, you know."

"I shall be most happy," said the Prince. "Yes, I suppose you had rather a busy night, and you will have even a busier day I presume," he went on as they sat down at one of the side tables in the vestibule and a waiter brought the wine. "It will be a spectacle which I can assure you I shall consider it a great privilege to witness. The concourse of a brave people celebrating the freedom which its own valour won from a powerful tyrant."

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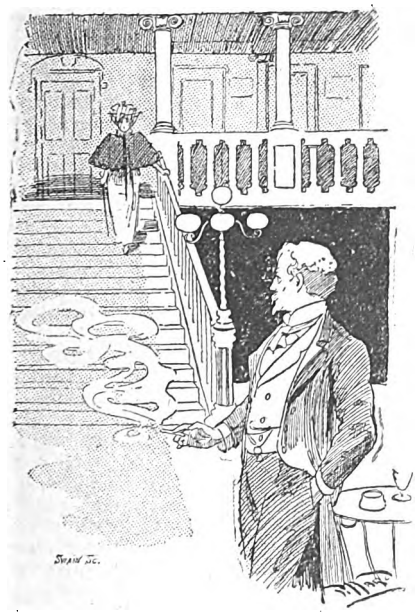
"From a tyrant that once was powerful, you mean, Prince," said the Secretary with a sneer that he took no trouble to disguise. "A nation that could make such an unmitigated fool of itself as England made of herself after Amajuba may safely be looked upon as what the French call *un pouvoir fini*. Besides England is not ruled by statesmen now; she only has politicians, and with them one can do anything."

"As you did over the Jameson business, eh?" laughed the Prince as he raised his glass to his lips. "Well, I am no friend of these grasping English as I think I told you last night, so here's to the drawing of the Lion's fang's, or such stumps as he may have left, and prosperity to the United States of South Africa — and their future President!"

The eyes of the two men met as the last words were spoken slowly and deliberately. The Secretary's face flushed, and his eyes kindled, but Prince Paul's was as calm as if he had uttered the merest commonplace.



"I will answer your toast to-night, Prince," said the Secretary, and as he spoke the Prince noticed a little catch in his voice. "At present I will content myself with thanking you for it. Here's to all you say."

Then they drained their glasses together and the Prince heard the Secretary's clink ever so faintly against his teeth. His eyes were fixed on the staircase and the flush on his cheeks had deepened. The Prince looked round, and, as he expected, saw his daughter coming down the stairs.

CHAPTER IV.

Amajuba Day, 1896.

A really pretty woman seldom looks more fascinating than she does when she is frowning good humouredly; at least so the Secretary thought when Vavara came towards the table looking in mock displeasure at the empty champagne glasses and saying:

"Mr. Secretary, this is hardly what I expected to find one of the leaders of a simple-lived, pastoral people doing a few minutes after eight o'clock in the morning. I hope you are not beginning to corrupt them with the wickednesses of European civilisation. You know the example of those in high places goes far."

There was an undercurrent of irony, almost indeed of chaff running through her tone that the Doctor hardly relished. He somehow didn't like the idea that she should know the Boer character as he knew it. He felt that if she did, not even the leader of such a people could hope to stand very high in her favour. Still he comforted himself with the thought that after all she could not know very much and that only from hearsay probably in England, and everybody knew the truth was never told there about the Boers except perhaps by the Little Englanders whom the Boers themselves laughed at. As he rose from his seat he said:

"I plead guilty, Princess, to the champagne if not to the corruption. You may call it a relic of the bad habits I learnt in Europe."

"Ah, yes," she said very sweetly. "In Berlin, I suppose—when you went to have your throat attended to. I am so glad to see how completely it is cured."

Now politically, if not physically speaking, his throat was rather a sore point with the Secretary for, in spite of the ingenuous explanations of Baron de Quarles and his own emphatic statements, evil minded sceptics wilfully persisted in making unpleasant allusions to political matters whenever that throat was mentioned. And yet, keen reader and all as he was of human character, the fair, frank face before him told him nothing, and the tone in which the words were spoken rang so absolutely true that there was nothing for him but to utter a few conventional words of thanks and then suggest that it was time to start for the station.

But a spirit of mischief seemed to have taken possession of the Princess Vavara that morning, possibly as a natural consequence of the complete success of her night's work, and as they were driving up Markt Straat she looked back at the big block of Government Buildings and said:

"Is it true, Mr. Secretary, that a few years ago your Parliament used to meet in a little one-storeyed thatched house, and that in those days Pretoria was only a little village?"

"Yes," said the Secretary. "That was how the English left it. They never seemed to think the country worth developing."

"But it must have cost a great deal of money to make all this change. Where on earth did it all come from? From the gold mines, I suppose."

"Or rather from those who made the gold mines," the Prince chimed in with a laugh. "No offence, Mr. Secretary, those people are only fit to be taxed. If they had been worth anything more they would either have taken the country or swamped the Government by this time. They are numerous enough and rich enough to do it, I suppose."

"Undoubtedly, but they have no ideas beyond money-making in spite of their talk about reform. Why, just imagine, in that fiasco which they call the Revolution they never pulled up a rail or cut a wire until one of their most prominent leaders rode down from Park Station to Roodeport on a luggage train and pulled up a few rails to prevent the ammunition train getting to our people at Krugersdorp. He had no idea the train he rode down on was the ammunition train, and that he pulled up the rails behind instead of in front of it. What can you do with people like that except tax them?"

"And yet you are going to practically admit the whole lot to the Franchise to-day?"

"Yes, we are—on certain conditions, which you will hear from the President's proclamation."

"I suppose it would be indiscreet to ask you if it would be possible to gratify our curiosity beforehand?" the Princess asked in the tone of one who expects "no" for an answer.

The Secretary was silent for a moment, during which he gave a little pull at his handsome moustache, then he said with a little laugh:

"For the first time, Princess, I am going to refuse you, not because I wish to disappoint a very natural curiosity, but because I absolutely decline to spoil for you what I think will be the finest dramatic effect you have ever seen."

"That is just what I deserve for my indiscretion, for now, of course, you have increased my curiosity tenfold. I wonder if I could get it out of the President after you have introduced us."

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"You are at the most perfect liberty to try, my dear Princess," laughed the Secretary. "Do you speak the Taal?"

"What's that?"

"The combination of unpleasant sounds and imperfect grammar which our good burghers are pleased to call a language. It is not a musical tongue, and I must confess that His Honour doesn't speak it to advantage, but you will be able to judge of that for yourself to-day."

"But doesn't His Honour speak English?"

"The old gentleman understands it perfectly, and speaks it very passably, but hatred of England, and all things English, is, and very properly too, part of his religion, and so officially the language is a dead letter to him. Well, here we are. I don't suppose he will be very long after us. If you'll follow me I'll get you a good place. Ah, there is the Baron. Come, I will put you into his charge, as I shall be busy for a few minutes. You couldn't be in better hands. He is the best natured and most obliging man in Pretoria."

"Except one," murmured the Princess as the Secretary handed her out of the carriage.

They passed through the double lines of the Guard of Honour, composed of the newly-organised State Artillery, gorgeous in new uniforms and showing a thoroughly German precision of dress and attitude, as was only natural seeing that about half of them had served their time in the German Army, and that the whole corps was drilled and almost entirely officered by Germans.

The Baron came to meet them at the station gates resplendent in his Orders, and arrayed in the whitest and stiffest of shirts and the glossiest of broadcloth, and beaming with good nature and justifiable importance. The Secretary went and joined the other members of the Executive who were waiting to receive the President, and as he stood among them the Prince could not help saying to the Baron:

"Don't you think our friend the Secretary shows to great advantage among those other people? What an exceedingly common-looking lot they are, and how frightfully they are dressed! Why didn't they remain faithful to the ancient costume of their country? Some of them would look quite picturesque dressed like those men in the long boots and broad hats that you see going along beside the bullock-waggons."

"Wait till you see His Honour himself," whispered the Baron with a wicked twinkle in his eyes, "but for Heaven's sake have your facial muscles well under control. Ah, there he comes!"

"What a very warlike turn-out for the ruler of such a peace-loving-people," said the Princess in a low tone to the Baron. "Why, the Emperor himself is not guarded like that when he drives about Petersburg. Surely you have no Nihilists in Pretoria?"

"No," said the Baron. "Only Outlanders and Englishmen."

"To say nothing of German Jews and Hollanders," added the Prince with a gentle smile. "I wonder which will prove the most dangerous in the long run? But really the old gentleman seems to like to be well guarded."

As they were saying this a small, neat brougham, drawn by a pair of bright bays, was coming up the road at a rattling trot in the midst of a cloud of dust. Six mounted police in black patent riding boots, close-fitting white breeches, blue tunics, and white spiked helmets, rode in front, two more were at each side, and six behind, each with a loaded revolver at his hip and the butt of a loaded rifle resting on his thigh.

The Guard stood to attention as the carriage approached. It pulled up at the end of the double line, a couple of sentries strode forward, one opened the door and the two stood, one on either side of it, with the rifles at the salute.

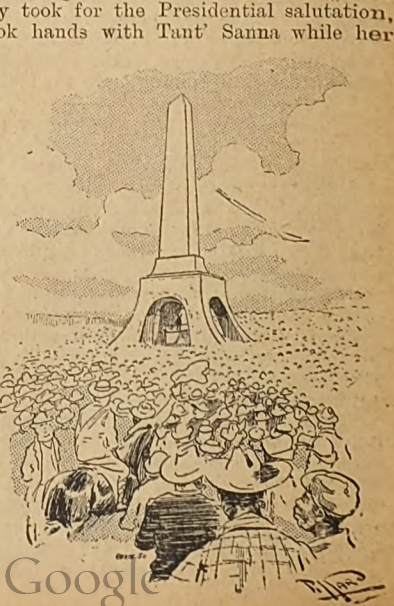
Vavara saw a big, ungainly form, almost elephantine in

shape and proportions, climb down awkwardly through the narrow door. It was arrayed in shiny broadcloth, and a broad sash, not at all unlike the adornment affected by Good Templars on parade, had been apparently thrown over the badly-fitting frock coat, which, as usual, was buttoned by a single button across the chest.

As the figure turned she saw a few orders and stars sparkling on the black cloth. A not particularly good silk hat was planted firmly on the back of a big head, and from under it looked a very big red face, set off by a long, ragged fringe of grey hair that ran from ear to ear under the heavy chin.

Then the figure turned again, after bobbing clumsily in acknowledgment of the salute of the Guards, and helped the female counterpart of itself out of the carriage, after which Oom Paul and Tant' Sanna walked up arm in arm between the files of the Guard attended by the members of the Executive, hat in hand.

A few moments later the presentation took place, and Princess Vavara felt her dainty little hand resting in the limp grasp of a huge hairless paw, and found herself looking up into one of the most grossly animal faces she had ever seen. She repressed an almost irresistible shiver, and hid the change of expression that came over her face by a graceful curtsey, which won from Oom Paul a fat, approving smile. Then she heard something between a chuckle and a grunt which she correctly took for the Presidential salutation, and then she shook hands with Tant' Sanna while her father was being presented to His Honour. After that the Presidential party with the *élite* of the Executive boarded the special train, and left the station amidst a chorus of cheers, and a salvo of rifle-shots.



At Johannesburg there was a tremendous ovation waiting for the good President who was about to do the loyal Outlanders justice at last, and at Krugersdorp the train seemed to Vavara to be running

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through innumerable multitudes of people and whole towns of white-tented waggons. Indeed, as she said to the Secretary, she could never have believed there were so many people in all the Transvaal.

There was very little interest either for Prince Paul or his daughter until the President rose on the platform under the base of the Monument of Independence to make his long-awaited proclamation. But as she looked round over the sea of stern, rugged faces that surrounded the platform and the monument and watched the varying waves of expression that swept over them she saw that every man and woman was hanging on the rough fast-flowing words as though they were the very words of life and death, as in good truth they were destined one day to be. And when the climax came, prepared and all as she and her father were for it by their previous knowledge, it seemed to come upon both of them like a thunderclap out of the silence of a summer evening.

The President had begun his oration as usual by recounting the brave deeds of the Voortrekkers and the triumphs of the War of Independence. Then he went on to the reform movement in Johannesburg and the Jameson Raid, and this brought him to the Proclamation itself. He read it through to the last paragraph, and then a deep hush fell over the vast assembly, and Boer and Outlander looked at each other in the face in silence. Hands were clenched and here and there cheeks grew pale, for that last pregnant paragraph proclaimed the abrogation of the Convention of London, and the absolute independence of the South African Republic, and restricted the promised franchise to those of the Outlanders who were ready, not only to abjure their allegiance to their own countries, but to spend their means and, if necessary, shed their blood in defence of the land which henceforth would claim them absolutely as its own.

As the President thundered out the last words he threw the parchment down and launched out into an exhortation aglow with rugged eloquence, calling upon his people and his children to stand by him in the last great struggle of the life that he had devoted to them and their country. Suddenly in the midst of his peroration he stopped, picked up a little bundle from the table, and shook it out.

It was a Union Jack.

A mighty chorus of howls and hoots and hisses instantly greeted the hated flag, and in the midst of it the President spread it out before them. Then, with a sudden wrench of his powerful hands, he ripped it in twain, and, flinging the two pieces to the ground, the shouted at the top of his great voice:

"So shall Africa be torn from England! We and our fathers made Africa, and we will have it. Our brethren in the South are only waiting to join hands, as they have already joined hearts, with us. What we have won with the rifle we will keep with the rifle. Stand fast for the Land, my children, and the God of your fathers will stand by you! By to-morrow morning there will be a hundred thousand burghers under arms from the Krokodil to the Cape. Do not you be the last among them, my children. Strike straight and hard for land and home and freedom. Stand side by side as brothers should, and forget not *Eendracht maakt Macht!*" *

No words could even faintly depict the scene which followed when the storm of cheering had died down into the calm of reaction. Great, rugged, grim-faced men whose whole lives had been battles with the wilderness and the enemies of the Land fell into each other's arms and sobbed like children. Some caught up their wives or little ones in their arms and kissed them frantically, and some gripped the barrels of their rifles with one hand, and the hand of a friend or comrade with the other, and eye met eye in a silence that said more than words.

But on the great deputation that had come from Johannesburg to present an address of thanks to the President after the reading of the Proclamation the last fatal clause fell like an exploding shell. Once more the sinuous diplomacy of the Boer had cheated and outwitted them. It was not political freedom that was given to them but the choice between commercial ruin and taking arms against the country of their birth. To refuse the Franchise would, they well knew, mean confiscation and expulsion, even if they got off with their lives. To accept it meant, in addition to treason, taking the chances of a long and bitter war which would bring paralysis of industry, stoppage of trade and financial panic as certainly as the rising sun brought the daylight.

When the first shock of the panic had passed they were staring mutely into each others' faces. A prominent citizen and millionaire who had been appointed to read the address said in a somewhat husky voice:

"We are spoofed again, boys, and badly too, this time. These chaps can't play a straight game; the Lord didn't make them that way. Well, the Old Man's got us on toast this time and any of you that likes can read the address, for I'm hanged if I do. Any takers?"

"Yes," jerked out another member, "I'm taking the next train back to Johnny'sburg. This is no place for us. Let's get while we have whole skins."

And so they went, sadder and wiser men, to await the bursting of the cloud that had so suddenly fallen and blotted out what they had so fondly believed to be the golden dawn of better days for the Rand.

* "Union makes strength," the motto of the South African Republic.

(To be continued.)

BRITON OR BOER?

For years past Britain and the Transvaal have been spoiling for a fight, and it was left to that well-known author, Mr. George Griffith, to write a strong and exciting serial nearly **four years ago** graphically describing a huge war between the two countries.

This story, coming so **soon after the Jameson Raid,** was read with unusual interest.

Now that Briton and Boer are in deadly conflict it will be interesting to read the story, and see how far the imagination of the author has actually come true.

It deals with how the countries fought out their final fight for the possession of the richest region of the earth and one of the fairest portions of the British Empire.

The chief characters are not fictions of the imagination, but life pictures of the very men who are now fighting.

Mr. George Griffith says: "In the romance of which the first chapters appear in *SHORT STORIES* dated Feb. 24th, I have attempted to answer in the form of an essay in prophetic fiction the question which forms the title of the story: 'Is the Briton or the Boer, the Englishman or the Dutch-Afrikander, going to rule South Africa?'"

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The Second Man Wins.

"THE country will have no able-bodied men left if this goes on. Both the Mogrows are going and I hear that——"

Elsie Banham interrupted her hostess.

"It seems to me that if a man has any special qualification which would be useful to his country, he should place it at its disposal. In fact, I'll go farther. I think every man if able and not directly wanted at home should go out."

Was it accident which made her glance at a man apparently talking to her next-door neighbour.

John Manbers had made Nathaniel's talk and admire while he was a student. Still more had he done so since, and just now his name was continually on the students' lips as almost certain to be chosen to accompany Sir James Crooner as first assistant to that eminent wound specialist, on his merciful mission to the seat of war.

Feeling just as sanguine herself about his receiving the appointment, Elsie Banham had steeled her unwilling heart and had spoken as she did to Mrs. Treller.

She knew how keen Manbers was on the appointment, and her remark, loud enough for him to hear, was meant as her encouragement to the man to whom, though he had not as yet spoken, she felt her heart was given.

Apparently, however, he had not heard or did not realise she had looked his way. He felt that there was still a chance that his claims might be passed over by the authorities in favour of Dr. Sivier, who had the advantage of John Manbers of some more years experience in surgery, and was, in fact, on the high way to very first rank in the science.

Manbers felt Sivier was his rival in the matter, but he also knew the latter was fated to be his rival and perhaps a successful one, in a matter much nearer his being. He knew that Sivier had long aspired to the hand of Elsie Banham, and he could scarcely at all tell at present whether the girl had made up her mind. She was very kind to him, and he had allowed himself to be buoyed up by a very distinct hope that some day he would win her.

Her remark had reached him in spite of his seeming indifference, and in the few subsequent moments he had made up his mind that if he could by any means whatever get to South Africa, he would do so.

His ruminations, which had begun to make his conversation drag, were interrupted by the entrance of one of the sons of the house. One of the "Natt" medicoes.

The youth only noticed his mother and Miss Banham talking as he came in, or his remark might not have been uttered at that precise moment.

"I say, mother," as he shook hands with Miss Banham, "isn't it a shame? Sivier's going out after all. They haven't given the job to Manbers. Sivier told Davis this evening that it had only just been decided. I am certain they've chosen the wrong man, for—Oh! I beg pardon, Mr. Manbers, I didn't see you. I hope——"

He stopped at a loss for words to excuse his behaviour.

Manbers, white with evident disappointment at the news, braced himself to mumble something of a reply; and as everybody began commiserating with him, he rose with a short laugh, saying he must take his leave.

He shook hands with Elsie last. The first news had disturbed her keenly in a way—she knew how anxious he had been to go. This feeling rapidly gave way to another of relief and secret joy at his not going.

She smiled as she gave him her hand, saying with the semblance of a blush:

"I suppose everybody can't go."

This could not disguise from him the fact that her former remark had conveyed to him that she would think more of him if he went out. He would not tell her so, however, and with a mere "Good-bye" he went.

For some days nothing more was heard of him save from Treller, who saw him at the hospital continually. Then—the authorities having allowed him some leave which was owing—he suddenly disappeared, to nobody's astonishment till his absence had extended to some weeks.

Sivier had gone out, but not before he had tried his luck with Elsie. She, however, with a firmness, which was perhaps not so apparent to him as it was meant to be, refused him.

He was a master of craft and noticed in his visits which became frequent as his time for going grew near, that she did not appear altogether well, that her energy had lost some of its vivacity. He, however, told himself that even if this were due to a certain affection for Manbers, it would soon be replaced by a much stronger one for himself, when he had returned with, in her eyes, the added advantage of having responded to the call of duty in South Africa.

When he had gone, and still no news of Manbers came, she began to feel that it was all a mistake, and that he had never cared for her to any degree.

Friends were useless to her; she mourned her broken

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heart in secret, and would have given anything for some occupation to take herself out of herself.

* * * * *

"Do you hear that, Sivier? They're sending all the right division forward. The chief's determined to force matters somehow, and we shall have our work cut out before night, that's certain. We're not going to occupy those hills without some awful carnage."

Sivier nodded to his chief without speaking. Doctors were bustling in and out of the temporary hospital, which was some three miles to the rear of the main column.

Everything was being done that could be done in view of an engagement which must have taken place within a few days; and now the silent bustle of the surgeons and their attendants became accentuated as the news spread that their services would be wanted earlier than was expected.

One of them stopped by Sivier, who was arranging in readiness the paraphernalia to be necessary before long in their merciful work.

"We're awfully undermanned. The staff of men and nurses wants trebling. Heaven knows how we shall get on if our men have bad luck."

"Good luck will give us our fair share," said Sivier cynically. "What's that remark somebody made about a victory being the next evil to a defeat."

Another man joined in the conversation.

"There's a batch of nurses coming within the next few hours. Ah! Sivier, there's something I wanted to tell you, but it's clean gone out of my head. I fancy it was that some man or other had been asking if you were here. Some man in the ranks of the regiment which arrived yesterday. Yes! that was it. Said he was one of the Nathaniel men, who had managed to get out, he said, in the character of a dispenser, and had worked the oracle to get to the front in the ranks. Do you know who it is?"

"Haven't the faintest notion," replied Sivier, "some poor devil of a student, I suppose, who claims acquaintance on the score of being lectured to. Can't be much good probably."

"It's good news that more nurses are due," chimed in another. "It would be all the better though, if more men had come. Any man, by the way, like your friend, for instance, would prove a god-send in odd jobs."

They separated again and the work of preparation for the casualties went on.

Fighting had commenced some time, and now that the big division on the right had gone forward, they expected they would be busy very soon.

An hour afterwards the first lot of wounded came in, and then relay after relay.

The engagement was not allowed to last long, the commander intending to continue on the morrow, so the column took up their position as far forward as they had secured.

The general sent word back of what he had done, and requested that the medical corps should assist as much as possible in fetching back the wounded —the combatant force being worn out with the rushing assault though it was comparatively short.

Most of the wounded were in, and night was coming on. Sir John Crooner, who was in charge, came to Sivier and said:

"Look here, will you go out with this last batch and make sure there are none left behind who are alive. It's going to be a bad night and we must be certain, humanly speaking, there are none left."

Sivier accordingly with some stretcher bearers and attendants went off to make the last survey of the battlefield.

Now and then when they reached the scene of action, they came across poor fellows dead to a superficial observer but with just a flicker of life left, and each was sent off to the hospital.

Sivier was walking a little ahead of the small corps. For a moment he could see no more bodies about, and then, twenty yards to the right, he caught sight of an object, which he hurried off to investigate. He was hoping this was the end of his task to get back and get some rest if possible.

He was not without a soul, but that soul was devoted to the attainment of personal aggrandisement, and much though he desired his reputation to be enhanced in his skilled treatment of the wounded, he had little or no heart to be touched at their miseries.

The small body kept on their survey of the scene some short distance away.

Coming up to the spot, Sivier turned his lantern on the apparently lifeless form lying face uppermost, limbs stretched out.

He started back with a short cry as his lantern's ray fell on the face. It was Manbers. Blood lay about his thighs, he had evidently lost a lot. The eyes were closed. Sivier recovered himself sufficiently, quickly to kneel down and feel for any signs of life without calling the attention of the bearers by his surprise.

He had been too astonished at first to have any but the instinctive thoughts of his profession, but in shorter time than it takes to tell he had realised what Manber's death would mean to him.

"Dead!—thank God!—I think," he said. "Dead!"

He was scarcely waiting to verify his opinion.

As he dropped the arm he was holding, the eyes opened and Manbers groaned.

"No—not—dead—yet," he jerked out convulsively. "That's—you, Sivier. Thank—God—someone's come. I'm—nearly—gone."

Sivier, his face perfectly colourless, gazed at him. Again for a moment he hesitated, and then a look of concentrated hate came over his face. He saw Manbers, unattended to, could not live a couple of hours, and the demoniac purpose fastened itself on his heart.

Without a word, he left his victim—he was certainly his murderer—and hurriedly went to meet the others who were now barely ten yards away, thinking that Sivier's long stay meant they were wanted.

Speaking rapidly, and finding time to feel thankful his face could not be seen in the darkness, he said:

"It's all right, the poor fellow's dead. I thought at first not, but he's quite gone."

Unsuspecting, they retraced their steps to the rear and reported that, as far as they could see, no living were left.

Arrived at the hospital, Sivier buried himself in his work of attending those wounded wanting care, and tried to forget.

He took no notice of surroundings. It was perhaps fortunate the others were too much engaged to notice his appearance.

An hour afterwards, he was preparing to leave off his work, and seek some relief in sleep of some sort.

As he left the improvised ward, two of the other men walked behind him. One of them called to Sivier.

"Those new nurses have come you noticed, I suppose. Did you hear about one of them. She was bathing the head of a poor fellow of the Brentshires, when he caught

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sight of the fellow in the next bed who was only slightly wounded, and he asked whether somebody or other had come in. He said the poor fellow had been shot endeavouring to rescue the speaker. The nurse recognised the name and fainted. She had evidently expected this man was all right and knew him, or else she did not know he was attached to this column. Anyhow they brought her to and she asked for particulars and now she's missing. They imagine she's gone to find out for herself. The other man was able to tell pretty well where it took place."

Sivier showed little interest—in fact had apparently taken no notice of the details, and his answer showed that the tale had not excited his interest at all.

"The Colonel's sent out a party to find her, or I'd go myself," said the first man. As they left the ward, the searchers arrived. Though a moment before, Sivier's existence had been a mere ordinary detail to the two speakers, one of them has said he will never as long as he lives forget Sivier's face as they encountered the party.

It has been surmised that the nurse who had really intentionally obtained an appointment to the identical column Manbers was in, was Elsie Banham.

The news of his injury, perhaps death, was an awful shock to the poor girl, but Providence had guided her steps, and the search party had found her holding his head in her lap and tearfully waiting for help which she knew would come.

Poor Manbers was too far gone to tell her sufficient particulars of Sivier's treachery, but the latter's terrible discomfiture as he met them told her quite enough.

"My God!" he exclaimed, as the awful thought went through him that Manbers was still alive.

He tried to tear himself away from the group, but not before the half-glazed eyes of Manbers met his, and he knew instinctively that all was known.

In the weeks of terrible uncertainty to Elsie that preceeded Manbers' recovery, they were not told the reason for the shot which roused the camp on that first night of their meeting, or of the discovery next day that Sivier, whose professional career had been so brilliant, had put an end to his own life.

S. B.

THE SAVING OF GUN No. 5.

It was "Gun No. 5" in Smith's Battery, but we of the 2nd Brigade always spoke of it as "Shuman's Gun." We did so because Shuman was sergeant of the third section of the battery, and because we came to know him well, along with many of the other gunners, before his gun had fired a hostile shot. It was a rifled nine-pounder, the same as all others, but for some reason it had a voice peculiarly its own. With thirty guns playing to right and left we could pick out No. 5 without a miss.

At First Bull Run it was the Sixth Regiment which supported and saved Smith's Battery from capture, and it was Company "H" which lay in line directly behind No. 5. That was the battery's first fight—our first fight—and there were good reasons for one to be proud of the other. The enemy came charging and yelling three different times, and each time, as they neared the guns, the artillerists fell flat and we rose up and poured in a volley which cumbered the earth with dead and wounded. In the last charge they reached Shuman's gun and began to drag it away. Only Shuman and two or three gunners were left. When the sergeant saw that his gun had been captured, he sprang up with a wild, desperate look on his face and cried out to us:

"They've got my gun, boys—they've got my gun! Rally, Company 'H,' for your honour's sake, rally and get it back."

And with our captain crying "Halt!" at the top of his voice, and with the brigadier cursing and storming that we should move without orders, we dashed forward as one man. There was only a sputtering of musketry before we were upon them. Then it was the bayonet and clubbed musket—even the fist. In five minutes we had heaped them up or driven them off, and the gun was recaptured. At Second Bull Run, as the Sixth was extended in battle line, Company "H" just fitted into a gap into a half destroyed stone wall. The gallant Kearney had fallen at Chantilly, and the blue masses had been slowly crowded back to the old battle ground. As regiments and brigades fell back, the feet of living men kicked aside the skulls and crushed the bones of the dead of months before. Exultant and implacable, the grey masses followed, and there was desperate fighting over that vast graveyard.

"There they come—get ready—here is where we roll 'em back!"

As a regiment in grey moved straight on for the gap, while other regiments moved upon the flanks, Company "H" poured in its fire and defied death. It beat back the regiment—ten to one—once—twice—thrice. Then it was decimated—and more. Of ninety-five men, only sixty could handle a musket.

"I can't spare a man! You must die where you are!" replied the brigadier when asked for reinforcements.

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The sixty men were reduced to fifty-five—to fifty—to forty, and we were yet holding the gap and holding the enemy when there was a hip-hurrah from the rear and up came "Shuman's Gun" on the full gallop.

No care for the dead—no care for the wounded. The gun swung into position and unlimbered, and Shuman's voice was heard above the crash of battle shouting:

"Down on your faces, Company 'H'—I'm going to use canister!"

It was but a single gun from the battery—but it was Shuman's gun—and as we fell on our faces the wicked missiles pinged and screamed above us and shrivelled up the head of the advancing column as fire destroys a dry bush.

The gunners worked with bullets flying about them as thick as leaves falling of an autumn day, and the gun held the gap and saved a brigade. And, though the whole army was pressed back and the foe gained another victory, those of us who lived laid our grimy hands on gun or wheel and accepted it as a comrade.

When Hooker went down into the wilderness to flank Lee out of Fredericksburg, the Second Brigade was with him, and Company "H" gathered wild flowers by the wayside and in the forest and made wreaths to hang upon the muzzle of Shuman's gun.

We were in the path of Stonewall Jackson as he advanced silently through the woods in the dusk of the evening and fell like a thunderbolt on the Federal army.

Surprised and panic stricken, we gave way and became fugitives, and of the artillery Shuman's gun was almost one of the first pieces captured. The sergeant fell back with us, crying and wringing his hands, as men do when death has taken all they love.

"They've got No. 5, boys—they've got my dear old gun!" he kept wailing, and we could say nothing to comfort him.

For half an hour it looked like a rout of the whole army. Then the Federals halted in their tracks and turned at bay. Shuman was still with us, and of a sudden he swung his hat and cheered and exclaimed:

"Don't you hear her, boys—old No. 5! There she goes again! The rebs have got her, but she's right ahead of us and we'll have her again!"

And above the crash and the roar we caught the peculiar tones of Shuman's gun, and Company "H" cheered and pressed forward until it became a wedge for the brigade. Yes, down there at the edge of the forest, where we had cut down a few score of trees as an abattis, the enemy were using old No. 5 against us. It was the weakest spot in their line.

A thousand men seemed to define the fact at once, and paying no heed to orders, a thousand men pressed forward. But Company "H" was first of all. Shuman's gun was the magnet. We leaped over the wounded and dead—we cheered and shouted—we dashed forward and the gun was ours.

And when it was ours again we hugged it and called it pet names, and we cared so little for the cyclone of death sweeping over those fields that we lifted the sergeant up and paraded him around. Hooker was driven back in disgrace, but we sang songs as we marched back to the river. We had not been defeated—we had retaken old No. 5.

There came a day, before Grant marched down over the same highways in search of the same old gray lion, when Sergeant Shuman was commissioned lieutenant. He had earned his promotion and more, but he would not accept it. As sergeant he would be in charge of No. 5. As lieutenant he would be in charge of a section.

And, too, there came a day when the overworked guns were ordered to be turned over and new ones issued. A piece of artillery is not like a man. When it has been fired about so many times the metal is weakened. When Company "H" heard of that order every man talked mutiny, and the crew of No. 5 were ready to desert. We went to our captain, and he to the colonel, and somehow it was fixed to keep No. 5 in the battery. Gun and caisson showed fifty-two scars of bullet and ball, and every spoke of the wheels had been stained with blood over and over again.

Shuman's gun was with us as we fought to the right or left at Petersburg, seeking to break through and seize the railroads; but when Grant finally settled down to wear out the foe we made a discovery and had to admit an unpleasant fact.

Old No. 5 had seen her best days. In her last fight her shot and shell had not been true, and grape and canister had dribbled from her muzzle. Even Sergeant Shuman sorrowfully admitted that she had been strained by the hundreds of discharges, and that the next one fired might kill friend instead of foe.

And one day, the order to turn in the old field pieces was reissued, and we bowed our heads and realized that we were helpless. The gun must go to the foundry to be broken up and come back to us in new form, and we gathered around it to say good-bye. There was tenderness and gentleness and love in the way we smoothed the scarred metal—in our touch of spoke and tire and box.

"How she spoke to 'em at Antietam!" whispered one.

"And how she moved 'em at Second Bull Run!" added a second.

"And she was red hot at Gettysburg!" put in a third.

And old No. 5 stood there ready to be hauled away to the boneyard, and of her crew only Shuman was left alive. He had seen five full crews bite the dust since that gun fired its first shot.

"They are coming for the gun—where's Shuman?"

He knew the gun was to go away that afternoon, and as he leaned against it with eyes fixed on the earth at his feet no man disturbed him. We knew he was remembering the hard fought battles—the critical minutes of the desperate charge—the flames which had leaped from that black throat to blast advancing men.

"Where's Shuman—call Shuman!"

No one had seen him for two or three hours. Men passed up and down calling his name, and the corporal who had come with four horses to drag the gun to the landing understood our feelings and waited.

By-and-bye a soldier who had been searching about came back to the gun and said:

"Thanks, corporal, but you may take it along now."

"But Shuman—wait for Shuman!" we protested.

"You need not wait. He is lying dead down there in his tent!"

And the men about the gun uncovered their heads and cast down their eyes, and drooping his voice to a whisper the corporal said:

"Start her up easy, boys, and pick out the best road. So the old gun goes, and Shuman goes, and I'll be blowed if it isn't a queer deal!"

M. Quad.

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WHEN Charlie Briggs came rushing into my room one night in December a few years ago, I must confess that I noticed a strange look in his eyes, and an unwonted fire in his speech and conduct altogether; yet I paid no heed to these things, for I knew—or thought I knew—my man. As events have proved, I was wrong, but I do not think anybody else, knowing Charlie as I did, would have acted differently. He was a rather excitable, moody chap—full of foolish fancies and strange ideas. I recall the fact that when we sat round the fire in the old days at the club and told stories, it was Charlie who excited our feelings by the most blood-curdling tales imaginable, accompanying the narration by such extravagance of gesture and passion that it was with a sigh of relief that we heard the *dénouement*, and saw him sink back in his seat, exhausted. When, therefore, he came into my room with his whole frame pulsating wildly with excitement, I merely motioned him to a seat and passed him my cigar case.

He took out a cigar, bit the end of it off, and then commenced to strike matches and throw them into the fire unused, while he chewed his cigar with a grim eagerness.

"Tom!" he exclaimed at last, "do you remember our talk the other day about heredity and all that sort of thing?"

"I don't recollect," said I.

"Well, I've been reading that bally French author—I forget his name—and I'm thoroughly convinced that there's something in it after all. Why, he gives instances where people have committed cold-blooded murders, not because they wanted to, but just because they couldn't help it, it ran in their blood. The notion takes my fancy. Just think of a man going up to his wife or his friend and committing murder, just because it's in him and he can't help himself. I tell you what, the law ought to be altered to meet such cases. A fellow is merely the instrument of Providence, as it were. He can't help himself, he merely obeys an instinct that is inherent in his being. What do you think, old man?"

"Well," I replied quietly, "it's a rum subject, and not congenial to me. If you weren't so serious I should say you had had a Scotch or two to-night."

"Oh, rot!" he exclaimed. "You fellows always turn my ideas into fun. Why can't you——"

"Your ideas!" I interjected. "Like your cheek! It's the French—What's-his-name's ideas."

"I tell you what, young man," said Charlie, oracularly, "I admit that chap has started the idea in my brain but——" here he paused and clenched his hands—"I can give him points. He has mooted the thing, but I can see deeper than he ever did. I am a living example of heredity! Oh, don't laugh—what I am telling you is right."

"Where do you mean to lecture on the subject?" I asked banteringly.

"What I'm telling you is gospel, on my honour, Tom," he went on, stalking the room as he spoke. "I have given some thought to the matter. It seems to me that whilst a man may live as harmlessly as a dove up to a certain age, he may suddenly realise his responsibility to his ancestors, so to speak. You see, what is inbred, what is in a man's heart, will be sure to work itself out. What is the name of that yarn—oh, I forget—it doesn't matter—something about what's bred in the bone. Now listen. I've come to give you advice. As sure as I'm a living sinner, it will do you good. When you hear of a murder or anything of that sort, don't you go and blame the fellow in every case."

"Much obliged to you," I answered.

"You don't take me seriously," he protested. "I assure you, what I've told you is true. Believe it or not, I tell you I'm a living example of—Now, look here, Tom—quick! See my face? Doesn't that convince you?"

I glanced at his face, which was almost unrecognisable.

"Horrible!" I yelled at him. "Get out, you silly ass!"

In an instant he was himself again.

"Now, at certain times of the day I feel like making that mess of my features," he said. "Of course it's no pleasure to me to do it. I simply *must*."

"Well, all I can say is that if you must, don't come here with that ugly—I beg pardon, Charlie——" I hesitated, for a shade of annoyance had appeared on his face. "I mean, old man, don't honour me by a visit when you've got 'em coming on you."

"Tell me," he said eagerly, "what did my face look like just then?"

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I examined his countenance steadily for a few seconds. No—he was not joking. The fellow was quite serious.

"You looked like—well, I can't tell you. Go out and have a Scotch."

"All right," he exclaimed, seizing his hat and going out.

I met him the next evening at the club—not the old one—but a more sedate one where the fellows talked about art and literature, and kindred subjects. We didn't tell blood curdlers there.

As soon as he caught sight of me, he ran to my side, and, shaking my hand heartily, exclaimed: "What rubbish did I favour you with last night, old man?"

"Oh, you talked the merest nonsense," I answered.

"You must forgive me," he said imploringly. "Take no notice of it—there's a good chap. I wasn't myself."

"No, you weren't yourself," I laughed, "and it's a good thing, too, for if you had been, I should have kicked you out! But, as it is, I always carry a loaded revolver on my person. The precaution is necessary when one associates with victims of heredity."

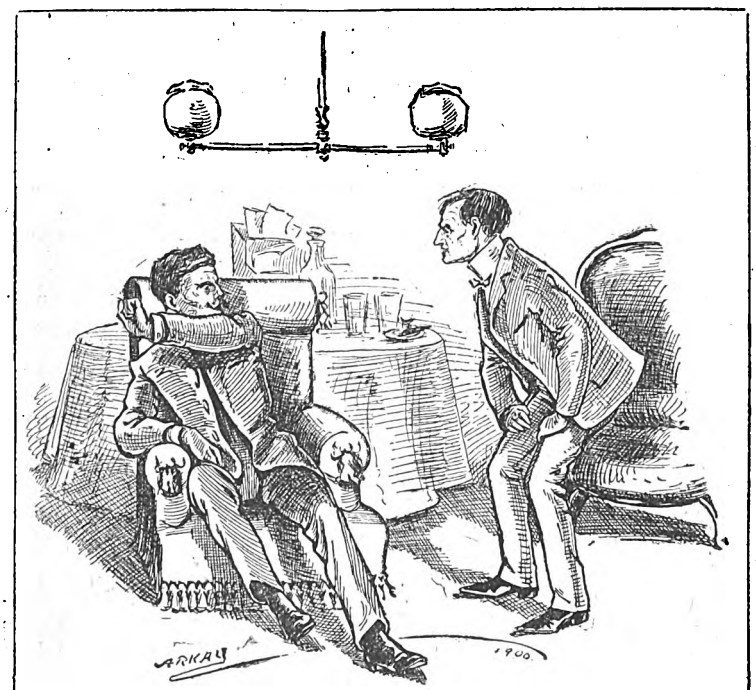
When I mentioned the weapon I thought his face grew hard and he bit his lips, but when I had finished, he appealed to me thus:

"Oh, don't be a fool — forgive me, won't you?"

"Certainly, my dear boy," said I, and the incident dropped. Shortly afterwards, we went out for a stroll. It was a fine, breezy night; the air was hard and cold; the moon raced across the heavens. and the street lamps shone through a haze of fog. Had we walked slowly, we must have been numbed with cold, for the frost bit to the bone, but we were young and impulsive, and covered the ground quickly.

On the Thames Embankment we paused for a moment and surveyed the shivering group of half-starved men and women, who were huddled together like a flock of sheep.

"Poor devils!" said Charlie, gazing at them. "Heaven only knows how they suffer. Born into a life where there is nothing but death for them. Death for their hopes—their poor, half-starved brats—and, presently, death for their own bodies. Just consider. These poor beggars never know what it is to smoke a cigar or gush over a book, or go to the theatre. Ugh! what a life!"



"Horrible!" I yelled at him. "Get out, you silly ass!"

As soon as Charlie started talking, the difficulty was to get him to stop. He was at all times a brilliant conversationalist, but I think he excelled himself that night. He rose to the heights previously unattainable. His flights of rhetoric still linger in my ears like an oft-recurring dream. I can hear him quote poetry by the canto, dwelling on the strongest parts like a child lingers over the name of the hero in a fable. If I had known what had happened before he met me that evening, I think I should still have admired him, only in that case it would be the sort of admiration which is compelled, not drawn—the fascination of the serpent that is ready to strike.

He seemed fresher, more buoyant than I had ever known him, and capable of saying something interesting about everything we saw. His fancy seemed heightened—freed from the dull influence of the body—and, as he talked, there passed before my mind's eye pictures of life in its broader aspects—life in climates that froze man to the marrow, or scorched his skin like parchment.

Death, that phantom of the night, posed before me for an instant, too, dark, and black-robed as usual. If Charlie could have sat down, and committed to paper the thoughts of his brain that night, the world of books would have been enriched.

We hailed a cab, and drove through crowded London. Away in the busy thoroughfares, the pulses beat quicker, the traffic moved to a livelier tune, and the scenes in my mental panorama shifted with ever increasing rapidity.

"What a number of people there are in London!" remarked Charlie rather insipidly after a silence which succeeded one of his loftiest flights.

"Yes," said I; and then I added, for sheer devilment, "Plenty for you to choose from."

I felt his grip on my arm grow tighter.

"What do you mean?" he said sharply.

"Oh," I said, "the other night you were talking of obeying the behests of your ancestors."

He made no reply to this sally, and just at the moment an incident occurred which diverted my thoughts. The newsboys were crying out something in their best style, and, judging from the vehemence with which the words were distributed, something extraordinary had occurred.

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Wondering whether we were at war with a European coalition, or what other startling event had taken place, I leaned out and signalled to an urchin to bring me one.

"Last edition, sir!" cried the boy. "Horful murder in town! 'Scape of the miscreant!"

We stopped, and I purchased a paper.

I was about to open it when Charlie said "Don't be a fool! Why do you want to read that thing here?"

"Why not?" I said, wonderingly.

"You seem in a desperate hurry to read of the decease of one of your kind!" he growled, sulkily.

I took no notice of him, however, but went on reading. It appeared that a horrible murder had been committed in the open street in broad daylight that evening. The victim was a gentleman who was standing in his door, when a well-dressed man, in a brown suit, had rushed at him with the ferocity of a tiger, and smashed his skull with a loaded stick, or something of that nature.

Reeking with blood, the victim fell against the door, and the murderer, possessed by a thirst for blood, paused and drove a knife into the prostrate body up to the hilt, and then fled.

Despite all the efforts of Scotland Yard, the murderer was still at large, and the greatest indignation was felt by the populace.

I offered to read the paragraph out to Charlie, but he refused almost angrily, explaining that he never read a paper in the street.

"You shall read it at my place if you like, old man," he said, presently, when he was, apparently, in a better temper. "You'll come to supper with me, won't you?"

"I don't mind," I answered, and shortly afterwards we pulled up at his place in Grafton Square.

"Nice to have the house all to oneself, isn't it?" said Charlie, when we were seated indoors. "My landlady, bless her heart, has gone away for the day, and I'm all alone in my glory. Do you like sauce?"

"No thanks," said I.

"Do you know," said Charlie after supper, "I think you shall read that out to me now. I like to hear of such crimes, and I'll tell you why. We hear a lot of talk about the physical degeneration of the race, and all that sort of thing. Well, when a murder is committed it shows that the virility of the race is still existent. You see, it takes a bit of muscle and nerve to kill anybody. I've often thought, when reading an account of a brilliant bayonet charge by our fellows, what brutes they must be. Fancy an officer cutting a man's head off, or slashing the sword through flesh and sinew, and, shortly afterwards, coming home to a drawing-room and acting the gentleman! Why, it's a brutal game, take it at its best. Of course, mind you, if we hadn't the men to do it, we should be in a queer street, and it shows that the race is not losing fighting power. At the same time, what I'm trying to show is that physical ascendancy is a brutal and an ungodly thing."

"There may be something in what you say," I replied shortly.

"Now old man," said he, leaning back in his chair and smoking hard, "start away."

"What?" said I.

"Read that murder case out to me," said Charlie.

"Oh, I don't think I will, old chap," I answered. "The fact is, I don't like such gruesome details, and the subject is not pleasant. I'm afraid I'm a chicken-hearted fellow, Charlie."

"Oh, hang that!" he exclaimed. "Read it!"

"Excuse me," I answered; "I don't think you'd enjoy it."

"I know you're a chicken-hearted fellow," said Charlie, rising from his seat. "and that's the very reason why you *shall* read it. Start away!"

"Did you say *shall* read it?" I inquired; "because, if you did, you're forgetting yourself! I shall not read it!"

Charlie crossed the room at a bound.

"By Heaven! you shall read it!" he cried, his eyes dancing before me like burning coals.

I rose from my seat and faced him. His face was perspiring freely, and his hands were shaking with excitement.

"Sit down, old man," I said quietly; "you want a little drop of Scotch."

"Tom, you hear me," he cried. "I'll have that paper read! Your will is nothing to mine. I'm your master, this is my house, and I'll have my own way here!"

"You must be joking," said I. "Really, the joke has gone far enough. I know your penchant for practical jokes, but this is surely too much."

"Don't drive me to desperation, Tom," he cried, holding himself back with some difficulty. "Read it!"

"Look here,

Slashing the sword through flesh and sinew.

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Charlie," I said. "I know what a joke is and I understand a joker. But I give you fair warning. If you come a foot nearer I shall hit you between the eyes."

"What!" he roared, taking off his coat hurriedly. "You'll hit me! Why, I'll lay you out in two minutes!"

I did not take off my coat, but stood on the defensive.

"What is the matter with the man?" I exclaimed, and at that instant he startled me by shouting at the top of his voice: "I'll teach you to defy me! I've killed one man to-day, and I'm going to finish you this night!"

My head swam for just an instant, as I glanced at his clothes, and saw that they were brown — the same as described in the paper.

I strove to collect my scattered senses, and face the situation calmly.

I beat him down again, until I was sick of the work.

I was unarmed, whereas, doubtless, he had the knife I looked at his face and saw murder written there in plain letters.

He dashed the table out of his path and came rushing for me. I saw the glitter of steel. My hands flew instinctively to the nearest chair. I picked it up and swung it as he came, catching him full on the head and sending him down with a great clatter. He struggled to rise, but I beat him down again until I was sick of the work.

Ten minutes from the time he commenced I had him bound and helpless. I went out and sought a policeman. A tall man came up to the door.

"Have you seen a policeman about?" I asked.

"I'm a detective," he said. "Can I come in?"

I brought him in and showed him Charlie.

"I've been watching this house all the evening," he remarked. "I had suspicion, but could not take any decisive step without having more ground to work upon."

He stooped and felt in Charlie's pockets.

"Here's another knife, and there's blood on it," he said, drawing out a red-stained knife. "This is the one he used, no doubt."

Poor Charlie was hanged.

F. Sternner.

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT THE WAR.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "Fortune's Sport," by Mrs Williamson, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source must be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. James Chapman, Off Dewsbury Road, Hunslet, Leeds. Attempts for this week's prize should deal with WAR ANECDOTES and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, February 26th. Post-cards only, please.

Not Enough Regret.

A DRILL instructor, who was the terror of every recruit, and the remorseless tyrant of the awkward squad, was putting a firing party through the funeral exercise. Having opened the ranks so as to admit the passage of the supposed cortège between them, the instructor ordered the men to rest on their arms reversed. Then, by way of practical explanation, he walked slowly down the lane formed by the two ranks, saying as he did so:

"Now, I am the corpse. Pay attention."

Having reached the end of the party, he turned round, regarded them steadily with scrutinising eye for a moment or two, and then remarked, in a somewhat solemn tone of voice:

"Your hands are right, and your heads are right, but you haven't got that look of regret that you ought to have." J. C.

A Steel Monopoly.

A COMPANY of an Irish regiment, now serving in South Africa, were fighting their way hand-to-hand through a village against stubborn resistance.

One man who had bayoneted his opponent, after vainly endeavouring to extract his bayonet, as a last resource, hurriedly placed a cartridge in his rifle and practically shot the man off.

One of the civil officers close by turned to him and expostulated with him for what he considered his brutality.

"Well, sor," replied the Irishman unabashed, looking round at his comrades in the thick of the fray, "I can't have this one man monopolising of my bayonet."

C. R. F.

Archbishop Temple and the Pink Bedroom.

ARCHBISHOP TEMPLE on one occasion was entertained by a clergyman during the absence of the clergyman's wife. On leaving, the host politely expressed the hope that when next his lordship honoured the house Mrs. Temple would accompany him.

"No, thanks," the Archbishop laconically replied, "Mrs. Temple doesn't like roughing it."

The clergyman's feelings were deeply hurt, and he unburdened his soul to his wife on her return.

"Why, my dear," she exclaimed, "you didn't surely put the Bishop in the pink bedroom, did you?"

It appeared that he had.

"Oh, then, that's it! I put all the plate in that bed." W. E. T.

"Which One?"

A CLERGYMAN, who is a prison chaplain, tells the following good story about one of the prisoners:

"I entered the cell of a prisoner," said the chaplain, "a hardened-looking man, with a countenance not exactly beatific.

"'Ah, my good man,' I said, 'what would your poor wife say did she know you were here? But perhaps she knows of your terrible position?'"

"'Which one do you mean, guv'nor?' said the convict. 'I'm in for bigamy—hitched on to four of them!'"

T. A. W.

A Yeomanry Anecdote.

To show the relative positions in life of members of yeomanry corps the following anecdote may be cited:

A regiment in the North on permanent duty were going recently through their movements when a private, not suiting his sergeant, the latter was reprimanded with:

"Private Jackson, if you don't pay more attention I shall report you."

The private rejoined:

"Aye, du it if thou dare, an' aw'll raise the' thy rent."

The effect may be imagined. J. C.

A Compromise.

AN ardent disciple of vegetarianism advertised recently for a servant, and stated that preference would be given to a girl willing to devote herself to the vegetarian creed of her mistress.

One shrewd applicant for the situation said:

"Well, ma'am, it's like this. I'm a Wesleyan myself, but I'm not what you'd call prejudiced against the Vegetarians, and I don't mind attending the Vegetarian Church once on a Sunday to please you!" W. C.

He Went.

NOT long ago a practical jokist conceived the idea of frightening passers through a country churchyard by dressing himself up as a ghost.

One night, about half-past eleven, a burly old farmer was coming along, when out jumped the apparition.

"Well, who are you?" asked the agriculturist.

The ghost wailed forth some sentence ending with "ghost."

"Now, look here," said the farmer, as he began to drop across him with a stick, "you clear off. It is time all you confounded ghosts were in bed."

The ghost went. E. N.

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Shot by an "Ad."

At the time of the Maori War a friend of mine had a strange experience.

The publishing office of a local newspaper was close to the scene of some of the hottest fighting.

During the struggle the Maoris ran short of ammunition for their guns, and, raiding the newspaper offices, charged their guns with type and stereo-blocks.

This novel ammunition proved very effective. One of the white invaders was severely wounded with a patent medicine advertisement, another was crippled for life by a church bazaar announcement, and the editor, who had taken refuge with the British troops, had a narrow escape of being hit with one of his own poems!

E. M.

He Shifted.

A cabby was one day standing by his cab, when a Johnnie came up and stood quizzing at it, and the following conversation took place:

Johnnie: "Is that your cab?"

Cabby: "Yes."

Johnnie: "I thought it was a cats'-meat barrow."

Cabby: "And so will a lot more people if they see puppies smelling around. You will oblige me by shifting."

H. E. H.

A Problem for the Police.

An American correspondent gives the following as an example of the rigid formality with which the officials in some parts of Russia act:

Russian Official: "You can't stay in this country, sir."

Traveller: "Then I'll leave it."

Official: "Have you a permit to leave?"

Traveller: "No, sir."

Official: "Then you cannot go. I give you twenty-four hours to make up your mind as to what you shall do."

F. H.

A Man and His Wife.

An old story in a new guise is sent in by a reader.

A man was seen leaving his model dwelling, while from the window above his wife poured after him ceaseless volleys of what is politely known as "langwidge." But in the enthusiasm of her eloquence, she leaned out too far and fell on to the pavement. A horrified spectator hurried after the husband with the news. As he was breaking it, the man, with a face full of suppressed feeling, murmured, "Don't make me laugh; I've got a cracked lip."

W. P.

The Time to Get Married.

They were talking about the Scriptures, and, of course, her knowledge of the Bible was proper and more accurate than his.

"In the Bible," said she, "one can find directions for conduct in all the circumstances of life."

"I'm afraid I can't accept that proposition," said he.

"Why not?"

"Where does it tell one when to get married?"

"It says that now is the accepted time," replied she demurely. Subsequent events proved that she was right.

H. W. W.

Burst from Bondage (a Novel).

He was immured in the darkest dungeon beneath the castle moat.

"If I had only a saw, a file—anything," he moaned as he looked at the solid bars across the solitary window.

Then an idea struck him.

His face brightened up like a warehouse conflagration.

Rapidly running over his supply of collars which had just come from the laundry, he selected one fitted for his purpose.

Five minutes later the great middle bar of the window, dexterously severed by the sawlike edge of the laundered collar, fell apart.

He was free!

E. E. H.

All She Required.

A certain shopwalker in a large establishment is noted for his severity to those under him in business. One day he approached a junior assistant from whose counter a lady had just moved away.

"You let that lady go without making a purchase?" he asked severely.

"Yes, sir, I——"

"And she was at your counter fully ten minutes?"

"Doubtless, but then you see——"

"Exactly. I saw that, in spite of all the questions she put to you, you rarely answered her, and never attempted to get what she wanted."

"Well, but——"

"I shall report your carelessness."

"Well, I hadn't what she wanted."

"What was that?"

"Half-a-crown. She's a book canvasser, getting subscribers to the 'Life of Moses.'"

And the shopwalker retired crestfallen.

W. E.

Character Not Good.

In some rural districts of England there are held annually hiring fairs, where farmers and others attend to engage servants.

At one held in Gloucestershire last autumn a farmer opened negotiations with a lad who seemed suitable for his purpose. Various questions having been asked and answered, the farmer inquired at last:

"Hast got a character from thy last place?"

"No," replied the boy; "but my old gaffer be about somewhere, and I can get he to write I one."

"Very well," was the reply, "thee get it and meet I here again at four o'clock."

The time came, so did the farmer and the boy.

"Hast got thy character?" was the query.

The answer came short and sharp:

"No; but I ha' got thine, and I bean't a-coming."

D. S. H.

The Boers' Irish Brigade.

A corporal in the Scots' Fusiliers, writing to his brother in Coventry from Frere Camp, says:

"Just before the battle the Irish Brigade (Boers' side) sent a note to our Dublin Fusiliers saying that they would be glad to get the opportunity to wipe them (the Dublin Fusiliers) off the face of the earth; but the note was returned by the Dublins to say that they would walk through the Irish Brigade as the devil did through Athlone."

M. J.

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BARTY'S BOLD VENTURE.

THE Rev. Marsden Tracey rang the bell violently:

"James, summon the servants into this room at once."

"All of 'em, sir?"

"Yes, all of them. And James, are there any others in the kitchen?"

"Only Sir Reginald's coachman, and Mr. Austley's groom, sir."

"Send them here as well."

In a few minutes a somewhat disorderly procession, blinking with astonishment, straggled into the room, headed by James the white-haired butler, and brought up in the rear by the odd boy, whose whimsical face was sicklied over with a look of dismay.

"My dear," continued the vicar, speaking to his wife, "will you request Miss Macalister to join us. If Mary is not asleep, she must do without her nurse for a time." Then he turned to a lady of striking appearance, and said: "Madame, may I ask you to summon Annette?"

"No! No!" she began, with an excited gesture, "there is no need to send for Annette, dear sir; she has been with me for twenty years, and I will answer for——"

"Pardon me, madame," interrupted the vicar in a decisive tone, "but she must be present."

In response to a call, a tall, thin woman of foreign air, and with a nose so large that it was a limb rather than a feature, came into the room. As soon as she entered, the vicar locked the door, and put the key in his pocket.

"A very serious thing has happened," he said. "Madame Benedetti has lost her diamond cross, the gift of the Emperor, Alexander the Second."

Sir Reginald lifted his eyebrows, and a low murmur of consternation came from the assembled domestics.

"Madame tells me that she promised to show it and other of her presents, to the ladies after dinner. For this reason her maid left it in its case on the dressing-table, and when she came up for it after dinner, discovered that it was no longer in the room.

"Someone must have taken it during the time we were at dinner, or soon after. Can any of you offer any explanation as to its disappearance?"

"I don't think anyone in the kitchen could have took it, sir," said the kindly old cook; "we haven't had a minute to spare to go upstairs if we wanted."

"Speak for yourself, Mary," said her master sharply. "Again I ask, can anyone explain this matter? because with the permission of my guests, I propose to have every inmate of the house at the present time searched. As no one speaks, may I beg you, madame, as the one person beyond suspicion, to put on your cloak and go to the police, which is just above this house, and desire Inspector Walsh and his wife to come here at once."

We looked at each other in bewilderment, not unmixed with suspicion. A short time before we had been honoured guests—now we were apparently under police surveillance.

Until this sudden transition, the dinner-party had been a brilliant success. The vicar had been quite at his best. Musician, novelist and parish priest, with an unrivalled acquaintance with the foibles of men and women, he had maintained his reputation as one of the most entertaining men in England.

But the bright, particular star of the evening was his friend, the famous cantatrice Madame Benedetti—most seraphic of singers and most good natured of women. She had promised to sing for us, and so anxious were we to listen to that superb voice, that when the mystic nod had been given by Mrs. Tracey, which is the signal that sends the female fleet sailing out of the room, we had not hesitated to follow at once to the drawing-room.

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Trained to observe the faces of people, I had noticed a change in Madame Benedetti's expression upstairs. She looked concerned and annoyed, and subsequent events showed that her countenance faithfully reflected her feelings. She had discovered the loss of those famous diamonds which were as familiar to concert-goers as the ample form upon which they rested.

In due course madame returned, accompanied by Inspector Walsh and his diminutive wife. One by one the guests were taken into the smoke-room or the library, and as the footman expressed it, "were turned inside out." Then, in their turn, the servants had to submit their persons to a rigorous search. A kitchen-maid promptly went into hysterics, declaring herself to be as innocent of the theft as that metaphorical personage the "babe unborn." Mr. Austley's groom, too, showed a suspicious unwillingness to yield himself to the inquisitive fingers of the Inspector; but the investigation revealed nothing more detrimental to his credit than half a roasted chicken.

The precious stones remaining undiscovered, other police were introduced into the house, and all its chambers and appurtenances were subjected to the most vigorous scrutiny. Even the bed-chamber to which my patient, Miss Forrest—the consumptive niece of Mrs. Tracy, had been confined during the day by illness, was not exempt from a careful search.

Many curious things came to light, but not the diamond cross. That magnificent piece of jewellery, valued at six thousand pounds, which had marked the admiration of the Emperor of All the Russias for the genius of Madame Benedetti, had disappeared as completely as though the brilliants had burnt themselves up in the light of their own sparkling.

By the vicar's advice, a reward of one hundred pounds was offered for information which should lead to the conviction of the thief. Still nothing was heard, and in two or three weeks more, the sensation of the hour had passed into the limbo of forgotten things.

About two months after this piece of excitement, as I drove in from the country, I noticed that Blind Barty's pitch was vacant: yet it was Saturday evening—his busiest time. The weather, too, was eminently suited to the calling of a mendicant, but Barty's wizened little figure and unshaven face—not omitting the moving legend he wore suspended round his neck—were nowhere to be seen. As his medical adviser, and as one well acquainted with his habits, I wondered what had become of him.

Although Barty could not *look* on the wine when it was red, he knew its taste particularly well. Once in his cups, he had walked off the quay into the river, and had been with difficulty rescued and resuscitated. With unconscious humour he ascribed his mis-chance to the fact that the riverside was "badly lighted." At various times, while "on the spree" as his wife called it, he had fallen down an area, been run over by a green-grocer's cart, and collided with innumerable lamp posts. Many and dishonourable scars attested the number and variety of his injuries and escapades.

Fearing lest he had come to grief, I alighted from my dog-cart, and made my way along the narrow street in which he lived. As I drew near his cottage, the door opened, and a small boy darting out, headed with precipitate swiftness in the direction of the police-station. From the interior of the house came a loud, thick bellowing, mingled with voices of wailing and lamentation. As I came up to his house I saw a boot come through a window, narrowly missing a spectator's head. The blind man was busy, pelting his family circle with any minor article of furniture which came readily to hand, while his curses would have brought a blush to the face of the Foul Fiend Himself.

These disturbances were not unusual, poverty or riches would produce them. If his harvest of coppers had been abnormally plentiful, or if the British public had passed his money-box unheedingly by—in either case he was apt to become riotous, and show a reckless disregard for his household goods.

To-night, Barty appeared to be entering into the festivities with more than usual zest. As I entered, a piece of coal struck the wall near me, and exploded like a shell. He turned fiercely towards me, and then began to grope for another lump of coal with which to salute what he took to be the constable who usually ministered to him on these occasions.

At the sound of my voice he ceased his labours, and allowed himself to be led to his seat by the fireside. Turning his sightless eyes in my direction, he said: "It ain't drink this time, Doctor."

"Well, what is it this time," I demanded sternly—"madness—or have you come into a fortune?"

"That's just it, Doctor," he said, rising in his excitement, and standing with his hands grasping the arms of his chair: "I 'ave come into a fortune. I've nobbled the one hundred pounds! Yes: the whole bloomin' lot! I feels that pleased that I must do something."

Then I understood the meaning of Blind Barty's demonstrations.

"Man!" I burst out, "is this really true?"

"The Inspector said the money was as good as in my pocket," he replied. "Besides," Barty went on convincingly, "she has confessed."

"She?" I ejaculated, and my mind reverted immediately to the woman of the immense nose, and of the eyes set closely together. I had distrusted her from the first.

"Tell me all about it."

Barty drew a packet of cigarettes from his pocket, and I waited with the utmost impatience whilst the blind man selected his weed, and proceeded to destroy the scientific theory that the *raison d'être* of smoking lies in being able to see the curling fumes.

"I'm just thinkin', doctor, what a wise chap I was to keep my own counsel," and he gave a nod worthy of Lord Burleigh.

"There's no need to keep it now," I said: "go on."

He gave a grin which displayed his sunken gums to the worst possible advantage, and went on:

"You remember the night of the Vicar's dinner-party, sir?"

"I have every reason to do so," I answered.

"It was a Friday, at the tail end of October, and a cold, damp evening with falling sleet. I was late that night, and chilled to the bone. Although it was after nine o'clock, my boy George hadn't come to take me home, and I was trying to keep myself warm with thoughts of how I should punch that young rascal's head for leaving his poor blind father so long in the cold. It's the way with them boys doctor; let them get their nose outside the——"

"Yes! yes!" I interposed, "but to your story."

"I was a-goin' to tell you," he went on deliberately, "that I was waiting there when I heard someone walking up and down on the other side of the street, and by-and-bye the gent comes across and he says to me:

"'Why the deuce don't you go home on a night like this, and go to bed?' and he chucks a sixpence into my

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box. Before I could tell him about my boy George, he turns away and walks up the street again.

"D'reckly after, I hears someone else coming along from the Vicarage way, and two of 'em stops. The gentleman as gave me the tanner says:

"'Have you got it?'

"Then he laughs and say's: 'By Jove! you are a good 'un. Come down here,' and they comes across the road and goes down Brewer's Hill just behind where I was standing.

"Next day I heeard all about the robbery, and I says to myself—I'll bet my life the chap as gave me the sixpence is in it. When they told me there was a reward of one hundred pounds, I kept my ears pretty wide open I can tell you, for I knew I could swear to his voice anywhere."

"But, why in the name of fortune did you not communicate with the police?" I inquired.

Barty—the truth must be told—spat upon the ground violently; "Not any police for me, thankee. If I told them anything about it, they'd only go and muddle it. If they did happen to tumble on the man by mistake, they'd collar the reward—not me."

"But you told me just now it was a woman who confessed."

"So it were. I'm a-leanin' up to that. This afternoon I was at my pitch, when all at once I heard the same steps that I heard two months ago, but the steps of the other party, d'ye understand, not the gent's."

"Do you mean to say you can recognise people by their steps?"

"Yes;" he answered with an air of triumph, "as easily as you can their faces. I knowed the steps, because the party walked in a dragging sort of way, and because she was wearing them india-rubber things for keeping out the wet, just as she did on the night when the things were took.

"Well, I knowed it was the same person by the walk and the jemimos, but I was certain I was right when I heeard her cough. I noticed it that fust night—not what we calls a churchyard cough, but a reg'lar tearing cough, as makes you sorry for anyone as has it.

"She was on my side of the road, and—I don't know what made me do it, doctor—as she goes by me, I puts out my hand like this and catches her by the dress, and I says: 'Stop! What about them diamonds at the Vicarage?'

"She gave a sort of screech that made my blood run cold, and falls on the pavement. Then a crowd came around, and I was so turrified that I didn't know my own name for a minute or two. Very soon a constable comes, and someone tells him that I had assaulted a lady and knocked her down. I was more turrified than ever. But when the Inspector comes up, I sticks to my story, and he says: 'Barty, there's something in this,' and he takes the lady back to the place she'd come from.

"In a bit he comes back to me and he says: 'You've done the trick this time, Barty, for the lady has admitted that she took the diamonds.' So I shuts up shop for the day, and when I gets back to my old woman, I admit my feelings were too much for me."

Leaving the blind man to chuckle over his good fortune, I went on to my house, to find the Vicar at the front door, alternately plucking the door handle and pounding with the knocker.

"My niece is dying!" he said; and without another word, we tore through the streets to the Vicarage.

Our speed availed us nothing, for an attack of hœmorrhage—the result of weakness and excitement—had mercifully released the unfortunate girl from the need of appearing at the bar of an earthly court of justice.

Questioned by her aunt, she had admitted that whilst the guests were at dinner, she had risen from her bed, abstracted the diamonds from the diva's room, put on her macintosh and overshoes and had gone out to meet someone whose name she resolutely declined to disclose, but to whom she had "lent" the jewels to save him from ruin.

"Someone I love," she said, passionately, in answer to inquiries as to the man's identity.

Her failing strength forbade those about her to press her further with questions, and she died without having spoken the word they wished.

A few days after Miss Forrest's death, a package came to her, addressed in the handwriting of her scapegrace cousin, the son of the Vicar's only brother. It contained Madame Benedetti's diamond cross and a letter:

"My Dearest Old Girl,

"I have landed my coup at last, and have got into still waters again—for a time at any rate. I released the valuables from old Levenstein yesterday, and send them on to you. The old rascal grinned when he handed them back: I rather think he suspected something.

"I shall never forget how splendidly you got me out of the tightest corner I was ever in in my life.

"In haste, with heaps of love,

"Yours ever,

"Frank.

P. S. "You can easily put the cross in some place where it will be 'discovered.' Burn this as usual."

{Athol Forbes.
{David Garth.

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THE ANGEL OF THE REVOLUTION

By GEORGE GRIFFITH

CHAPTER LXX.

THE MORROW OF THE STRIFE.

SHORTLY after noon on the following day the *Ithuriel*, with Natas, Natasha, Arnold, and Tremayne on board, rose into the air from the grounds of Buckingham Palace and headed away to the northward. The control of affairs was left for the time being to a committee of the members of what had once been the Inner Circle of the Terrorists, and which was now the Supreme Council of the Federation.

This was under the joint presidency of Alexis Mazanoff and Nicholas Roburoff, who was exerting his great and well-proved administrative abilities to the utmost in order to atone for the fault which had led to the desertion of the *Lucifer*, and to amply justify the intercession of Natasha which had made it possible for him to be present at the last triumph of the Federation and the accomplishment of the long and patient work of the Brotherhood.

There was an immense amount of work to be got through in the interval between the pronouncement of the judgment of Natas on the Czar and his Ministers and the execution of the sentence. After twenty-four hours in Newgate they were transferred to Wormwood Scrubbs Prison, and there, under a guard of Federation soldiers, who never left them for a moment day or night, they awaited the hour of their departure to Siberia.

Communication with all parts of the Continent and America was rapidly restored. The garrisons of the League were withdrawn from the conquered cities, gave up their arms at the depôts of their respective regiments, and returned to their homes. The French and Italian troops round London were disarmed and taken to France in the Federation fleet of transports. Meanwhile three air-ships were placed temporarily at the disposal of the Emperor of Austria, the Kaiser, and the King of Italy, to convey them to their capitals, and furnish them with the means of speedy transit about their dominions, and to and from London during the drawing up of the new European Constitution.

A fleet of four air-ships and fifteen aerostats was also despatched to the Russian capital, and compelled the immediate surrender of the members of the Imperial family and the ministers of the Government, and the instant disarmament of all troops on Russian soil, under pain of immediate destruction of Petersburg and Moscow, and invasion and conquest of the country by the Federation Armies. The Council of State and the Ruling Senate were then dissolved, and the executive passed automatically into the hands of the controllers of the Federation.

Resistance was of course out of the question, and as soon as it was once known that the Czar had been taken prisoner and his army annihilated, no one thought seriously of it, as it would have been utterly impossible to have defended even Russia against the overwhelming forces of the Federation and the British Empire, assisted by the two aerial fleets.

The *Ithuriel* after a flight of a little more than an hour, stopped and descended to the earth on the broad, sloping, and now snow-covered lawn in front of Alanmere Castle. Lord Marazion and his daughter, who as it is almost needless to say, had been kept well-informed of the course of events since the Federation forces landed in England, had also been warned by telegraph of the coming of their aerial visitors, and before the *Ithuriel* had touched the earth, the new mistress of Alanmere had descended the steps of the terrace that ran the whole length of the castle front, to welcome its lord and hers back to his own again.

Then there were greetings of lovers and friends, well known to each other by public report and familiar description, yet never seen in the flesh till now, and of others long parted by distance and by misconception of aims and motives. But however pleasing it might be to dwell at length upon the details of such a meeting, and its delightful contrast to the horrors of unsparing war and merciless destruction, there is now no space to do so, for the original limits of this history of the near future have already been reached and overpassed, and it is time to make ready for the curtain to descend upon the last scenes of the world-drama of the Year of Wonders—1904.

Tremayne was the first to alight, and he was followed by Natasha and Arnold at a respectful distance, which they kept until the first greeting between the two long and strangely-parted lovers was over. When at length Lady Muriel got out of the arms of her future lord she at once ran to Natasha with both her hands outstretched, a very picture of grace and health and blushing loveliness.

She was Natasha's other self, saving only for the incomparable brilliance of colouring and contrast which the daughter of Natas derived from her union of eastern and western blood. Yet no fairer type of purely English beauty than Muriel Penarth could have been found between the Border and the Land's End, and what she lacked of Natasha's half Oriental brilliance and fire she atoned for by an added measure of that indescribable blend of dignity and gentleness which makes the English gentlewoman perhaps the most truly lovable of all women on earth.

"I could not have believed that the world held two such lovely women," said Arnold to Tremayne, as the two girls met and embraced. "How marvellously alike they are, too! Surely there must be some relationship. They might be sisters?"

"Yes, I am sure they are," replied Tremayne. "Such a resemblance cannot be accidental. I remember in that queer double life of mine, when I was your unconscious rival, I used to interchange them until they almost seemed to be the same identity to me. There is some little mystery behind the likeness which we shall have cleared up before very long now. Natas told me to take Lord Marazion to him in the saloon, and said he would not enter the castle till he had

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spoken with him alone. There he is at the door! You go and make Muriel's acquaintance, and I will take him on board at once."

So saying, Tremayne ran up the Terrace steps, shook hands heartily with the old nobleman, and then came down with him towards the air-ship. As they met Lady Muriel coming up with Arnold on one side of her and Natasha on the other, Lord Marazion stopped suddenly with an exclamation of wonder. He took his arm out of Tremayne's, strode rapidly to Natasha, and, before his daughter could say a word of introduction, put his hands on her shoulders, and looked into her lovely upturned face through a sudden mist of tears that rose unbidden to his eyes.

"It is a miracle!" he said in a low voice that trembled with emotion. "If you are the daughter of Natas there is no need to tell me who he is, for you are Sylvia Penarth's daughter too. Is not that so, Sylvia di Murska—for I know you bear your mother's name?"

"Yes I bear her name—and my father's. He is waiting for you in the air-ship, and he has much to say to you. You will bring him back to the castle with you, will you not?"

Natasha spoke with a seriousness more weighty than her words, but Lord Marazion understood her meaning. He stooped down and kissed her on the brow, saying:

"Yes, yes. The past is the past. I will go to him, and you shall see us come back together."

"And so we are cousins!" exclaimed Lady Muriel, slipping her arm round Natasha's waist as she spoke. "I was sure we must be related to each other, for though I am not so beautiful——"

"Don't talk nonsense, or I shall call you Your Ladyship for the rest of the day. Yes, of course we are alike, since our mothers were twin-sisters, and the very image of each other, according to their portraits."

While the two girls were talking of their new-found relationship, Arnold had dropped behind to wait for Tremayne, who, after he had taken Lord Marazion into the saloon of the *Ithuriel*, left him with Natas, and returned to the castle alone.

That evening, when the lamps were lit and the curtains drawn in the library at Alanmere, the same room in which Tremayne had seen the Vision of Armageddon, Natas told again and for the last time the story of Israel di Murska, the Jewish-Hungarian merchant, and Sylvia Penarth, his beautiful English wife, whom he had loved better than his own faith and people, and whose awful fate was now avenged as no human wrong had ever been avenged before.

He told, too, how he had taken his child-daughter out of the keeping of his wife's sister and her husband in order that he might educate her as an instrument of vengeance on his enemies, and of the old quarrel, now healed after twenty years of bitterness, which had arisen from this cause when he devoted her young life to conspiracy and plotting instead of letting her take her place in the world in which Lady Muriel had grown up.

He told, too, without the slightest reserve, how he had cast his spell over Tremayne and subjugated his will to his own purposes, and how he had intended to bind him for ever to the Brotherhood by giving Natasha to him in marriage, when "the Fates willed it otherwise," as he said in concluding his story, "and I was saved from doing a great wrong, for the intention to do which I have done my best to atone."

He paused for a moment and looked across the fireplace at Arnold and Natasha, who were sitting together on a big, low lounge that had been drawn up to the fire. Natasha raised her eyes for a moment and then dropped them. She knew what was coming, and a bright red flush rose up from her white throat to the roots of her dusky, lustrous hair.

"Richard Arnold, in the first communication I ever had with you I told you that if you used the powers you held in your hand well and wisely you should, in the fulness of time, attain to your heart's desire. You have proved your faith and obedience in the hour of trial and your strength and discretion in the day of battle. Now it is yours to ask and to have."

For all answer Arnold put out his hand and took hold of Natasha's, and said quietly:

"Give me this!"

"So be it!" said Natas. "What you have worthily won you will worthily wear. May your days be long and peaceful in the world to which you have given peace!"

And so it came to pass that three days later, in the little private chapel of Alanmere Castle, the two men who held the destinies of the world in their hands took to wife the two fairest women who ever gave their loveliness to be the crown of strength and the reward of loyal love.

For a week the Lord of Alanmere kept open house and royal state, as his ancestors had done five hundred years before him. The conventional absurdity of the honeymoon was ignored, as such brides and bridegrooms might have been expected to ignore it. Arnold and Natasha took possession of a splendid suite of rooms in the eastern wing of the castle, and the two new-wedded couples passed the first days of their new happiness under one roof without the slightest constraint; for the castle was vast enough for solitude when they desired it, and yet the solitude was not isolation or self-centred seclusion.

Tremayne's private wire kept them hourly informed of what was going on in London, and when necessary the *Ithuriel* was ready to traverse the space between Alanmere and the capital in an hour, as it did more than once, to the great delight and wonderment of Tremayne's bride to whom the marvellous vessel seemed a miracle of something more than merely human skill and genius.

So the days passed swiftly and happily until the Christmas bells of 1904 rang out over the length and breadth of Christendom, for the first time proclaiming in very truth and fact, so far as Christendom was concerned, "Peace on earth and Good-will to Man."

* * * * *

But in the East the red tide of battle was still surging fiercely to and fro as the swarthy hosts of the Moslems fought their way through and through the countless swarms of Mongols that kept pouring eastward only to die like flies in innumerable multitudes before the irresistible tempest of valour and enthusiasm that the raising of the Banner of the Prophet had let loose upon them.

The Council of the Anglo-Saxon Federation, well aware that no peaceful arguments would have any weight with these fiery warriors, drunk with battle and mad with triumph, had decided to let the Moslem and the Buddhist fight out the Armageddon of the East between them until the fittest survived.

All the approaches to Europe were rigidly guarded to prevent any incursion. The Mediterranean was patrolled by dynamite cruisers, which permitted no Turkish vessels, or, indeed, any that did not fly the Federation flag in addition to its own, to pass between Europe and Asia or Africa. The Dardanelles, the Bosphorus, and the Black Sea were held by an overwhelming naval force, and four millions of men were kept under arms ready to be concentrated at any point at which the hosts of Sultan Mohammed Reshad might approach too near to the area of Federation control.

(*To be continued.*)

A MAN is always proud of his children who are large for their age, except when he wishes them to travel on half-fares.

THE trouble with a young fellow in love is that he imagines everybody else is in love with the girl too; while if the truth were known, no one but himself ever looks at her.

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Pretoria Coupon, S.S.] *Feb. 24, 1900.*

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Address.....

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Day..... *Hour*.....
(Pretoria Time.)

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This notice and coupon also appears every week in the ILLUSTRATED WAR NEWS, HOME NOTES, SUNDAY READER, PEARSON'S WEEKLY, and the BIG BUDGET.

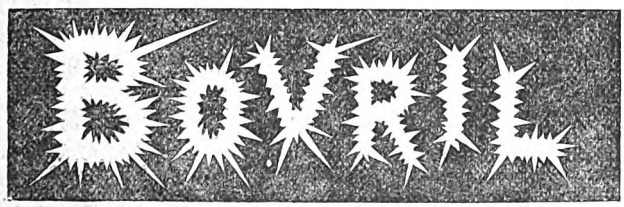
Readers of SUNDAY READER may enter with this Coupon.

Sir Wm. MacCORMAC AND THE FIELD HOSPITALS.

Extract from Sir Wm. MacCormac's Report to the "Lancet" after the battle of Tugela:

". . . . Awaiting their turn the wounded were "lying outside in rows, which were being continually "augmented by the civilian bearers coming in from "the field.

"As each wounded man reached the hospital he "was served with a hot cup of bovril, large cans "of which were boiling outside the tents."



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Malcolm's Christmas.

It was six o'clock on a cold November evening; snow lay on the ground; a few flakes were falling through the clear air.

Before a mansion in Park Lane a gentleman paced irresolute; his eyes dwelt anxiously upon one window in particular, across which the shadow of a woman was sometimes thrown.

Presently a hand drew back the curtain, and a face looked out into the street.

"She is not looking for me," said he, bitterly. "Ah! how shall I tell her?"

He almost staggered as he mounted the steps to the door, and even then stood irresolute, latchkey in hand, ere he entered the house.

"Is that you, Malcolm?" said a sweet voice.

"Yes, I am late."

"Then you must make haste; we dine out to-night."

The speaker came forward to the lighted hall; a beautiful woman, whose exquisite toilette glittered with gems. He turned from the vision with something like a shudder.

"How shall I tell her?" he murmured, as he wearily mounted the stairs.

He rang the bell as he entered his room.

"Tell Mrs. Hastings I am indisposed. I shall not be able to accompany her this evening."

The message sent, he sat down and buried his face in his hands.

His thoughts roved idly to the vision of his youth, in which he, supremely happy in a loving wife, hewed down every obstacle in his path and made himself a famous man. What was the reality he bitterly asked himself.

He had deliberately married a woman who had frankly assured him she could never love him—he had thought he could give all and demand nothing in exchange.

He shuddered as he recalled the loneliness and dreariness of the one year of married life.

A knock at the door interrupted these reflections; his wife stood there as he answered the summons, and his eyes, blinded by her dazzling beauty, discerned no new expression in the haughty face.

"You are ill?"

He did not reply; he stood looking down on her as one in a dream.

"Your room here is cold!" she said. "It is a bitter night. Will you not come to my boudoir? The fire is pleasant there."

He stared at her, then shook his head. "I have often told you," he said with scorn, "that I cannot breathe in such luxurious surroundings. My tastes are simple."

She glanced round the room, which, in comparison with hers, was simplicity itself.

"Then if I cannot do anything for you," she began——

"The carriage is waiting, madam," said a servant approaching.

"I shall return early," she said. "Au revoir."

Again he was left to his bitter thoughts. Too restless to keep still he wandered about the house from one magnificent room to another. At length he entered the boudoir, in the furnishing of which an expensively artistic taste was visible. He cast a scornful look on the luxurious room.

"It smothers one," he muttered.

His eyes, which restlessly wandered from one thing to another, now rested on a half-finished portrait, which, short-sighted though he was, he perceived to be a man's face. For a long time he hesitated to approach nearer. It was mean to take advantage of his wife's absence; yet as he thought thus, he moved forward, and peered into the pictured face. He started back in intense surprise—the colour rushed over his face.

"Do you think it good?" his wife's voice said at his side. For the hours had passed, and she had returned, and he was now looking at it for the tenth time.

"I am too much surprised at your choice of a subject to give a critical opinion," he replied.

"Your head makes a fine study," she replied calmly.

He bit his lip, with a cruel sense of her coldness.

"You are surprised to find me here?"

"A little. But come to the fire; you have a thoroughly chilled appearance. Stephen tells me you have not dined. I have ordered a light repast for you. You can take it here."

He was conscious of feeling cold and faint. She drew him forward to an easy chair; and, the tray, with food and wine, appearing as though by magic, he found himself eating and drinking at her request, and he glanced up more than once inquiringly into her eyes. He read nothing there to lighten his heart.

She took up a piece of embroidery and sewed diligently.

"By the way," she remarked, in a casual manner, "is it true that the Middleton Bank has stopped payment? Have you not shares in it?"

He made no reply. Her eyes met his with some anxiety.

"My whole fortune was invested there," he replied.

"Then you are ruined?" she said calmly.

"Utterly."

Both were silent then. Isabel's eyes glanced round the luxurious room, then she looked at her husband.

"I suppose it will not affect any of my personal property," she said anxiously. "You do not know. I believe that my Uncle Herbert, who died a week ago, has left me his house."

"No! I was not aware of it. Where is it?"

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"Oh! A farm right in the country," she replied, flushing under his intent gaze.

"You will not be destitute then, even if I fail to earn money at once," he said with keen sarcasm.

"That is well," she said quietly.

"You were frank when I asked you to marry me. You said you would do so to escape poverty—to assure yourself a life of luxury—you said I was not the type of man you could ever love."

"Have you remembered my foolish words?" she said flushing.

He laughed bitterly.

"A man does not easily forget such words as these," he said. "On my part, I promised never to obtrude my love for you."

"I absolve you from any idea that you have ever done so," she replied coldly.

"I promised to keep you as a princess; you were only to wish, and your wishes should be fulfilled. Have I hitherto kept my promise?"

"Every tangible wish has been gratified," she said gravely.

"At least you do me justice," he said, rising to his feet. "But now the failure of this bank makes it impossible to me to continue my practice of forestalling your wishes."

"You will have to give up this house?"

"Certainly; it takes a princely income to keep up."

"Will everything have to be sold?"

"Everything of value belongs to my creditors."

There was a silence.

"I have not had time to think. Possibly I may try my luck in Canada as soon as I can make arrangements for your comfort here."

"It would be a good plan," she remarked quietly. "You appear to like an outdoor life. You enjoy farming, do you not?"

"My father was a farmer. I inherit an instinct for outdoor pursuits."

She yawned a little and looked bored. He hastily rose and went away, bitterly hurt.

"At last!" she cried triumphantly, "at last!"

She sang a little roulade as she moved about the room. He heard it in the distance.

"She can sing when I am in such trouble. It is too cruel!"

* * * * *

A few days later he found her busied in packing her trunks.

"I am going to make a few visits while you are arranging for the sale," she said. "You may not hear from me for a few weeks, but I shall be safe and in good hands."

There was a pitiful appeal in his eyes—which might have gone to the heart of any woman—not to desert him in this bitter hour. His lips moved voicelessly, as if he would have made an appeal. She turned away, and went on with her packing.

When he came that evening she was gone. Every little token of her personal presence had vanished as though it had never been there. He received two short letters during the next few weeks; just an assurance that she was comfortably situated.

As she gave him no address he did not attempt to answer her letters. Two days before Christmas he received another letter from her.

"I am in a village called Shepstone," she wrote. "It is important to my comfort than you come to me at once. Catch the three o'clock train from Euston. A trap will be waiting for you. Come to-morrow—Christmas Eve."

He had just time to catch the train, for the letter had been delayed on its road to him. As he dashed on through the gathering gloom he mused sadly enough on his future. The heart seemed gone from his efforts to begin life again. For whom should he work? For a woman whose whole soul was wrapt up in self, in love of ease and luxury?

"I am the kind of man no woman would love," he said to himself. "Yet I am not without the qualities which should command esteem. I am incapable of an insincerity; to love once is to love eternally with me. Should I have done the bidding of this calm, selfish woman to-night did I love her less?"

Arrived at Shepstone he was instantly accosted by a man, who said he had brought a trap to meet him. Then he was driven swiftly for miles over the hard frozen roads through country enveloped in snow—too moody in humour to care to talk to his silent driver.

At length they entered a private drive, and presently reached a little cluster of buildings.

"That's the house—where you see them lights; she has lights in every window," said the man as he drove to the door of a quaint, old-fashioned farmhouse. The door opened as if by magic, and Malcolm stumbled blindly into the lighted hall. The door closed behind him.

"Welcome home, dear Malcolm," said a sweet voice at his side. His beautiful wife stood there, her eyes dancing with fun—and—what else did Malcolm begin to read in those lustrous eyes?

"Isabel!" he cried. He suddenly bent down over her—as her soft arms clasped his neck.

"Oh, Isabel! am I dreaming?" he cried, as he clasped her close.

"Take of this big coat," she replied, "and come into the kitchen. Do you think you could eat your supper just once in the kitchen, Malcolm—because you know I am going to cook it for you."

"Only tell me where we are. Is this Heaven—have we died suddenly—or am I wandering in dreams of bliss that might be mine—if—if—Isabel loved me?"

"There is no if," she said, drawing him to the glowing fire. "Oh! my love—how blind you have been. I have loved you for many a long month—but how could I tell you so—when you *would* believe I cared only for the presents you lavished upon me. Malcolm, this is my home, and I give it to you, it is Uncle Herbert's old farm and homestead. Won't this do as well as going out to Canada. He died leaving me this and all his immense wealth—wealth no one dreamed of his possessing."

"This is indeed a blessed Christmas Eve," said Malcolm, unwilling to lose his wife for an instant from his sight—and following her from pantry to kitchen as she bustled about her housewifely duties.

Ah! What an hour of bliss followed the cosy supper—how much to tell, how much to hear, what arrears of loving confidences to be made up.

And what a Christmas day was that which followed—what a truly divine service that which they so gratefully attended in the morning!

Blissfully, the day sped by—and plans for the future and bright visions of the happiness to be theirs filled their cup to the brim.

God speed them in their journey onward—sorrows will pass lightly over their heads, for they love one another.

Henry C. Dermer.

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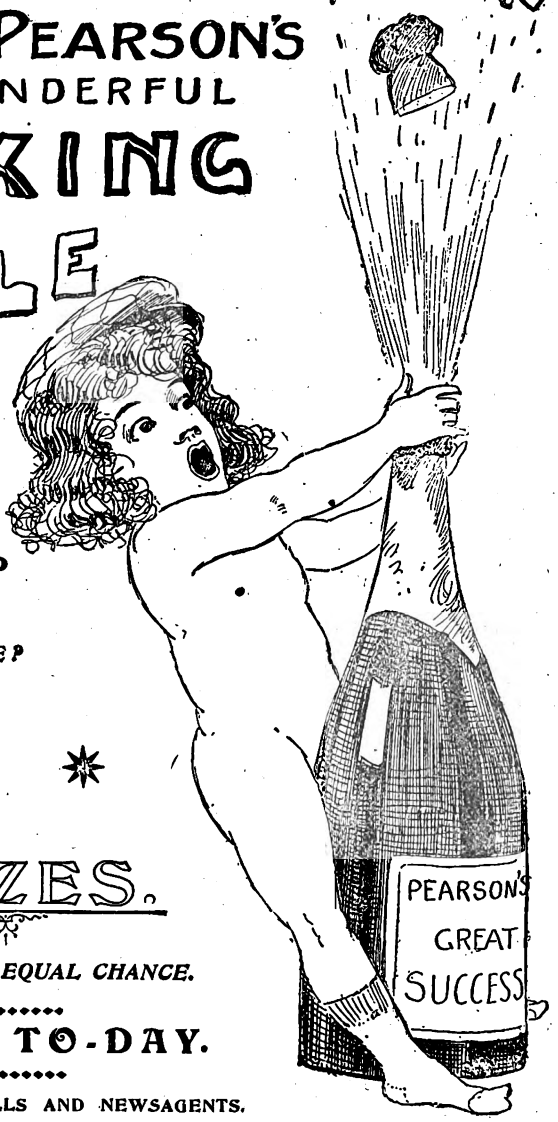

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The Brain Gymnasium.

ON this page, under the title, "The Brain Gymnasium," appear each week a series of puzzles calculated to occupy the attention of the competitors, with interest and profit to themselves, during the long winter evenings. Many of the tasks set are comparatively easy of solution, while others are designed with a view to taxing the abilities of the most proficient in this direction.

In these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the sender of the greatest number of correct solutions, and to the senders of the ten next highest number of correct ones will be presented either one of our silver-plated pencil cases or a copy of a popular six-shilling novel. Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, SHORT STORIES, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by Monday, March 5th, 1900.

No. 46.

MY initials are often my finals, and my whole is a doll.

1. A sued. 2. To employ. 3. A vessel.

No. 47.

FORM the name of a district in Africa by using the first and third letters of words signifying "disposition," "enthusiasm," "crowd," "inquisitive," and "restlessness."

No. 48.

A KIND of conveyance can be expressed by a word which, if read backwards, will give the name of the place where it is generally kept at night.

No. 49.

L R G N A L O O I E N T S
| | | | | | | | | | | |
E A N S G H O T R S S M O

REARRANGE the above pairs of letters so that the two rows, read horizontally, form a well-known proverb.

No. 50.

THE following are the consecutive consonants in a quotation from one of Scott's works. Fill in the vowels:

W D T H T N R Z L
R C L M R M M N T S R
F R D T N S W R.

No. 51.

FORM a square word from the names of the following:

"A fortified place."
"A musical instrument"
"A certain kind of leather."
"A portable canvas house."

One of the diagonals means, "to sound a horn."

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM Nos. 21 to 27.

FOUR competitors were absolutely correct in their solutions, and the prize of £2 has been equally divided among them. The fortunate ones are:

W. Henderson, 26 Princes Street, Perth, N.B.
Walter Thomas, 99 Islip Street, Kentish Town, N.W.
Miss E. Wallis, 71 Knollys Road, West Norwood.
J. Kean, 1 Clerk Street, Edinburgh.

The following each differed in one word only, and to these we have forwarded one of our silver plated pencil-cases:

Miss Mollie Rafferty, Edinburgh; Thomas Picton, Fulham, S.W.; O. S. Sinnatt, Manchester; J. H. Cockerill, Kingsland Road, N.; B. McFarlane Burrell, Plumstead; G. Hudson, Finsbury Park, N.; Miss K. Zerfahs, Upper Holloway, N.; A. Neve, Woolwich; S. F. Harrall, Plumstead, S.E.; J. E. M. Hall, Brockley, S.E.; Miss M. Zerfahs, Upper Holloway, N.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES Appearing in No. 579, Feb. 3rd, 1900.

No. 28. NINE. Ninepins, Spin.

No. 29. JOIN—Connect; SEVERED—Cut; CONNECTICUT.

No. 30. SAND - RING - HAM.

No. 31. "A little learning is a dangerous thing."—Pope: "Essay on Criticism," Page 2.

No. 32.
War*D*
Ar*B*a
R*E*ar
*D*ark.

No. 33. Dickens' "Oliver Twist."

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Series discount: 5 per cent. for 13, 10 per cent. for 26, 15 per cent. for 52 insertions.

Black blocks are charged 25 per cent. extra. All advertisements are subject to approval. All copy must be sent in by Noon on Tuesday, Feb. **27th**, if intended for the issue on sale March **13th**, and dated March **17th**. The Proprietors reserve the right to hold over or suspend the insertion of any advertisement without prejudice to other insertions on order. All communications should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, "Pearson's Weekly" Offices, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Printed and Published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON, LTD., at Pearson's Weekly Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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NOT HEAVY TO HIM.

The man on the elephant's back is nothing to the elephant. The big beast doesn't mind him any more than one of those immense dray horses you see in London minds the brass ornaments on his harness. Yet on my back or yours the man would be a load; and, if fastened to a lark's wings, the little brasses would hold him to the earth.

Thus, we are reminded, my thoughtful friends, that there are no absolute facts. The burden depends on the back. Albeit Samson walked off with the gates of Gaza, an ordinary garden gate would, I am sure, prove all that we should want to lug. It follows that weight or heaviness can, as the advertisements say, "be supplied in a variety of styles."

When, for example, Mr. Sidney Challanger mentions in a letter that at a certain period he was "heavy," he does not mean that he tipped the scales at a stone or two more than usual. His horse would have felt *that,* in case he rode one; but the truth is that at the time referred to he was actually under his proper weight by several pounds.

What he wants us to understand is that he was *heavy to himself;* it was not an increase of *weight* but an increase of *weakness,* having practically the same result. His explanation is that in the early part of 1890 he began to feel ill and out of sorts. He went about in a mazy way, feeling badly without knowing what the trouble was or how to account for it.

"I had," Mr. Challanger goes on to tell us, "a nasty taste in the mouth and no relish for my meals." But eat we all must, or starve; and eat *he* did. Not much, though. At best it was a forced business. Nothing tasted natural or good, and he took just enough to keep him going until the next meal time should come round.

"And even for that I had to suffer," he says. "After getting it down I had, almost immediately, a sense of fulness or distension at the stomach and pain at the chest as if a bit of food had lodged there—which couldn't be."

No, nothing lodged anywhere. What there was of it went straight down into Mr. Challanger's stomach, where it at once began to ferment and produce a gas which caused the feeling of fulness, while the irritated nerves set up the pain. It was not too much food but food not digested—food turned sour in the stomach—with the whole body behind it failing of the needed stimulus and nourishment of food, and wondering what the matter was. It was this state of matters that made him, to use his own words, "heavy, drowsy, and languid."

Any river in England, after a long drought in summer, *looks* just as Mr. Challanger *felt*—heavy, drowsy, and languid. And for an identical reason—the lack of necessary supplies. Wait an instant, though! Don't miss the point.

The rain, when it comes, fills the river by a thousand little channels falling directly into it. Not so as to food and body. Between *them* is a process; a mechanical, chemical, and vital operation—digestion. Mark you that, and act accordingly. Whether in the sky or on the ground water is water—the same thing.

But food and body are not the same thing. The first must be transmuted into the second by the miracle called digestion; for of all God's ways in nature none is more awful, more amazing, more glorious. And, when impeded or overborne, none which punishes the interference more certainly and swift.

"I got little or no sleep," continues our friend, "and awoke in the morning tired out, as after a hard day's work. Presently I could hardly walk, for very weakness, and from time to time had to give up work altogether. No medicine helped me—and I tried plenty.

"After three wretched years of this, Mrs. Bird of Tallistorn, told my wife about Mother Seigel's Syrup, and, through her, advised me to try it. She said my ailment was indigestion and the Syrup would cure it. And it did. One bottle greatly relieved me. I could eat freely, and food agreed with me. I persevered with the remedy and got strong as ever. All the pain and heaviness left me, and I felt light and energetic, although I have gained in weight."—Sidney Challanger, Gladstone Villa, Cwm, near Waunllwyd, Mon., August 30th, 1898.

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RED WHITE & BLUE COFFEE

DELICIOUS FOR BREAKFAST & AFTER DINNER.

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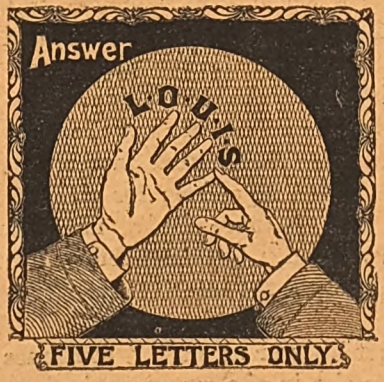

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"DOLLY" Cream Colour, for tinting Curtains, Muslins, Laces, Silks, Blouses, etc., a rich Cream Shade.

"DOLLY" Tints manufactured in nine shades—Pink, Terra-Cotta, Old Gold, Heliotrope, Pea Green, Canary Yellow, Red, Blue, and Cream—for Tinting Faded Ribbons, Lace, etc. Sold everywhere, **1d.** per bag. Will wash out when required.

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The **"DOLLY" Dyes** are fast on Wool and Cotton alike, and will not wash out or fade. "Dolly" Dyes are not Tints, but are Solid Colours, viz., Black, Brown, Blue, Green, Red, and Maroon. **Price 3d. each Dye.** "Dolly" Dyes for Home Dyeing are sold by all Grocers and Oilmen.

The **"DOLLY" SPECIALITIES** are Manufactured only by

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FAC-SIMILE OF "DOLLY" TINTS AND DYES.

IT IS NOT Reckitt's PARIS BLUE

UNLESS RECKITT'S NAME IS ON THE WRAPPER.

SEE INSIDE FOR OUR THRILLING SERIAL "BRITON OR BOER?"

SHORT STORIES

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN

No. 583. FOR WEEK ENDING MARCH 3RD, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

TAKE CARE

when drinking Cocoa to have the pure article only, as many so-called "Pure" Cocoas contain added matter that is not only unnecessary, but often positively harmful.

CADBURY'S

COCOA

IS ABSOLUTELY PURE

And untampered with, and can be taken with the greatest benefit in Childhood, in Youth, or in Old Age.

***THE BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL*—Article on "Drugged Foods," June 4th, 1898—says:**

"There is a general consensus of opinion that the addition of active drugs, belonging to the classes of nervine stimulants to beverages and articles of dietary in ordinary domestic use is not for the benefit of the community, and is likely in time to produce a deterioration of the public health. . . At the present moment we are beset by another danger arising from the addition of kola to certain articles of food. . . Kola has been found on analysis to contain 2·13 per cent. of caffeine. Caffeine is undoubtedly a useful drug when employed in suitable cases and in appropriate doses, but if taken habitually in large quantities it is capable of inducing an undesirable condition of over-stimulation of the nerve centres."

When asking for Cocoa, insist on having CADBURY'S—Sold only in Packets and Tins—as other Cocoas are sometimes substituted for the sake of extra profit.

A FREE SAMPLE *On receipt of Post-card, giving name and address, and mentioning "SHORTS TORIES," A FREE SAMPLE of Cocoa will be sent by CADBURY BROTHERS Limited, Bournville, near Birmingham.*

150,000 SOLD

"MACFADDEN'S PHYSICAL TRAINING,"

As sold in America for 50 cents

Price 1/- Post free 1/2.

Agents wanted.

The Famous Book By Professor B. A. Macfadden, the Leading American Physical Culture Authority.

128 Pages, Art Paper, 60 American Art Engravings. Chapters on Everything connected with development, maintenance of Health, Strength, etc., by Author, who transformed himself from a likely consumptive into a Champion Welter Weight Wrestler. Wrestling is the severest of all tests of physical fitness. Forewarned is forearmed. Be forewarned. Send for book now, and learn how to make yourself as fit as possible for the battle of life.

A COUPON VALUE 1s. FREE with Book.

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DON'T BE "BAGGY" AT THE KNEES OF YOUR TROUSERS

when for **2/6** you can have a pair of the **"K"** Trousers Stretchers, as used by society and military gentlemen. Makes Trousers *always fit, feel, and look like new.* Sent free from observation per return of post and post free for **2/6**. Two Pairs, post free for **4/6**. A Nickelled Cigar Cutter, with ring for attaching to watch chain, will be given *free* to all sending orders within seven days of date of this paper, which please mention.

LONDON NOVELTY Co., 1 Abbotts Road, UPTON PARK, E.C.

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Strengthen your Grip. Strengthen your Wrist.
Develop Enormous Strength in Fingers.
Cure Writer's Cramp. Cure Bicycle Cramp.
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With a "Health and Strength"

WRIST MACHINE

Physicians and Athletes have generally concurred that the wrist is the weakest portion of the human frame. It is the portion of the anatomy where strength is measured.

A person with weak wrists is a weak person constitutionally. When the wrists are strengthened the entire muscular system is made stronger.

There is no point in a man's anatomy where lack of strength is felt so much as in the wrist, nor where great strength is so useful, often seriously affecting his bread-winning power. With a systematic use of this machine only ten minutes twice a day you can double the strength of your hand in one month, and increase the size of your forearm very materially.

Purchasing and using a pair of Wrist Machines—one in each hand—saves half the time occupied in exercising both hands with one machine, and also ensures a more equal development of strength in the two hands.

Agents Wanted.

Prices—ONE, 2/6, Post Free, 2/8.
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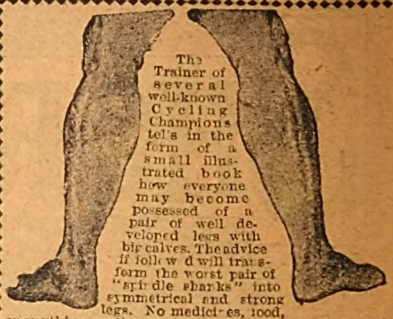
"HEALTH & STRENGTH" CO.,
73 FARRINGDON STREET, E.C.



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Champion Cyclist Trainer, 1 Abbot Rd., East Ham, E.

"EMPEROR MOUSTACHE TRAINER."

Invented by German Imperial Barber. Used by the German Emperor. Cures a straggling, ragged, etc., moustache, and quickly forces it to assume any desired style of arrangement. Worn at night. Sent per return post, and free from observation, post free for **2/6** or (finer quality) **3/6** only. Money back if not satisfactory.

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WHO TO MARRY, WHEN SHOULD TO MARRY

PLAIN TALK by the most celebrated American Medical Author and Specialist, Dr. Foote. A wonderful book. Nearly 1,000 pages. 200 anatomical illustrations. 36 true-to-life coloured illustrations. Over a million copies sold. Ours is the genuine unabridged American Edition with coloured plates. Post free, **6/6**.

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500 30-EGG INCUBATORS.

READ CAREFULLY AND WRITE AT ONCE.

Millions of money leave this country every year for poultry and eggs that could easily be produced here at enormous profit. TO AMATEURS ONLY. To encourage this industry we will Give Away 500 of our 20th Century Incubators Free of Charge, trusting that the profitable results obtained on a small scale will induce our clients to purchase our 10/- Egg Incubators, and make a good living from poultry breeding. Address MANAGER, Room N, POULTRY BREEDERS' APPLIANCE COMPANY, 3 Clarence Road, Southend-on-Sea.

ROSY CHEEKS

and a lovely complexion, skin clear as Alabaster, produced by one box of **Dr. LENNOX'S Harmless Arsenic Wafers**, the only cure for Pimples, Blackheads, Sallow or Greasy Skins, no matter how bad. Price per box, privately packed with Medical and Analytical Reports by Dr. Griffiths and Granville Sharpe, F.C.S., 2/6 post free. H. LENNOX, 21 Electric Avenue, Brixton, London. Absolutely harmless to the most delicate. Thousands of testimonials.

ALL FAT PEOPLE

can safely **Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: *"Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."* Send 2s. 6d. to **THE TRILENE CO.**, Sole Proprietors, **66 Finsbury Pavement, London.**

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Walnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They reduce me 2st., and I am cured." Mrs. Darnley-Smith, of Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, says: "Tablets have reduced me very much." Mrs. Crossley of Rose Hill, Torver, Coniston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

NOSE

MACHINES. LEES RAY, S. S. Dept., South Castle St. Liverpool, is a specialist on Ugly and Red Noses. Send stamp for particulars of his patent scientific Nose Improvers. Red Nose Cure, medically approved, 3/9. Outstanding Ear Machines, 11/6.

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When a lady, who has discovered a simple means of Self-Cure will be happy to send particulars of same to any sufferer from this distressing complaint. Free on receipt of stamped addressed envelope. ADDRESS:

Mrs. TREVOR WELLS,
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VARICOCELE.

Men who are weak and suffering from nervous exhaustion, loss of vigour, Varicocele, &c., can be successfully and permanently cured without operation or detention from business by THE DR. COLLINS most improved and rational method medical science has ever yet produced.

Particulars and proofs of successful cures sent free on receipt of address.

THE COLLINS REMEDY CO.,
Gothic House, 9 Erskine Street, Liverpool.

JUNO CYCLES FOR LADIES AND GENTS.

FREE OR FIXED WHEELS.

THE VERY BEST.
Carriage Paid.
Discount for Cash.
Write for New Season's List.

LISTS POST FREE

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JUNO Cycles and Accessories, over 100 pages, sent post free. Scorcher Book, 1/-; Standard Cyclometer, 10,000 miles, 1/10

METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS CO. Ltd.
Juno Cycle School & Works, 75, 76, Bishopsgate Street, Without, E.C., and Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

EPPS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

ESTABLISHED 1851.

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INVESTED FUNDS ... ... £10,000,000.

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.

FRANCIS RAVENSCROFT, *Manager.*

HAVE YOU EVER TRIED KEATING'S LOZENGES FOR YOUR COUGH?

DR. GABRIEL, M.D., L.R.C.P.

writes from Routh Park, Cardiff, Sept. 28th.

"I have now prescribed them for the "last 8 years in my hospitals and private "practice, and find them of great benefit.

"I certainly and most strongly "recommend them."

Sold everywhere in Tins 1/1½ each.

Short Stories

LOVE WAR ADVENTURE ROMANCE PATHOS HUMOUR

No. 583.] For the Week Ending March 3rd, 1900. [One Penny.

My Strange Night-call.

I had just retired to bed after a hard day's work, fagged and weary, wishing that I were almost anything but what I was—a doctor practising in a densely populated working-class neighbourhood. There the calls were plentiful, but the fees meagre, the said fees having to be collected in small weekly sums by my agent—an arrangement which seriously lessened the sum total of my annual income.

I was then unmarried (though I may say I am now fifty, with sons and daughters in plenty), and therefore had no sympathising ear into which I could pour my troubles.

I was stretching out my weary limbs, when clang went the night bell. Such was the force used on the bell-wire that I was certain that it had broken, and therefore lay still, thinking, however much the knob at the door was manipulated, I should not be disturbed.

In this I was mistaken. A few moments, and I was again disturbed—almost startled—by the savageness of the ring.

I went downstairs, turned up the gas in my surgery, and unbarred the door. It was pushed open impatiently, so impatiently that I was compelled to retreat, or otherwise I should have been bruised.

A lady entered, closing the door behind her.

She was tall, well-dressed, and seemed agitated. I could not clearly discern her features, but I saw through her veil a pair of dark flashing eyes fixed upon me.

Without waiting for me to speak she said:

"You have been long in coming, doctor. But let that pass! I want you to accompany me at once. Are you ready to go?"

I was struck by the voice—it was certainly that of a lady, but so intensely charged with sorrow or anguish, I knew not which, that its tones seemed to curdle my blood, and a shiver ran down my back as though someone had poured ice-cold water there.

Seeing me pause, startled, she hurriedly continued:

"You must come, sir; make your fee as high as you like, it shall be paid. It is a case of life or death! Good heavens, sir, she may be dying now while you stand there hesitating. Quick!"

All rights reserved.]

Without a word I returned to my bedroom and dressed. I did not like the case. The lady's manner perplexed and not a little terrified me. Yet I felt compelled to obey. Someone was in danger; it was my bounden duty as a doctor to give professional service. These thoughts flashed through my mind as I quickly dressed.

On again reaching the surgery, I noticed the lady's eyes fixed on the door through which I entered. She had evidently never taken them off it since I made my exit.

"I am ready," I said.

"You have got your instruments?"

"No; will they be needed?"

"I—I don't know; better bring them, sir."

I took my case of instruments from the cupboard in which they were kept, and placed them in my overcoat pocket.

"Allow me," I said, but the door was opened before I could reach it, and the lady was standing on the steps.

What a terrible night—or rather morning—it was! Neither moon nor stars were visible.

The lady walked on in front—it was more a trot than a walk; I followed, wishing I had refused to come out at all.

Turning a corner, I suddenly observed a vehicle. It was not a carriage; it was not a hansom; to this day I don't know what to christen that strange conveyance.

It was something on four wheels, with a dark cloth—probably tarpaulin—thrown over it.

I noticed that the horse was black, and the driver was muffled up so that his face would not be recognisable even with better light.

The lady opened the door and bade me to enter. She sprang in, closed the door, and sat down opposite me without a word.

The driver lashed the horse, and away we rattled over the stones.

I was familiar with every street in the district, and nearly every house; I could almost have traversed it blindfold.

But soon the district was left behind. On, on, we went through the heart of the town; on, on, till the wheels of the conveyance no longer rumbled over rough

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stones, but glided almost noiselessly over the country roads.

I became doubly nervous as we rode along. What did it all portend? Where was I being carried? A fear possessed me that all was not as it should be. I was checked in my agitated musings by the sudden stoppage of the vehicle. Where we were I did not know any more than the man in the moon, excepting that we were in the country, and must be miles away from my surgery.

It was a mercy, at least, that we had arrived at the end of our journey, and I should find out the object for which I had been brought so far from home.

The mystery was deepened, however, when, instead of our alighting, the door of the vehicle was opened from the outside, and in stepped two men, closing the door behind them; then the journey was resumed.

A sudden determination possessed me to know what all this mystery meant. I wet my lips with my tongue, for they were dry and hot; then I said, speaking as clearly as I could:

"I have the right to know where I am being conveyed, madam, and why the two men have entered the vehicle without my permission?"

I waited for several seconds, but there was no answer. This made me desperate.

I rose to my feet, and was about to reach the handle of the door that I might open it and get out, when the two men sprang upon me, forced me back into my seat, and in less time than it takes me to write the words I felt my hands tied and my eyes blindfolded.

"Villains," I shouted, "you shall suffer for this indignity. Have you brought me into this lonely place to murder me or what?"

"Don't be ridiculous, Doctor Smith; no harm is intended you. If you do come to harm, it will be your fault, not ours."

It was the lady who spoke.

She spoke calmly; I thought there was a strain of contempt in her voice.

"It is some villainous plot," I exclaimed excitedly, "into which an honourable gentleman of my profession has no right to be dragged."

"You will be asked to do nothing beyond exercising your professional skill, for which you will be handsomely paid," replied the lady.

"Why should you drag me so far—why should you pick me out as your instrument? Could you not engage one of my profession nearer to your own home?"

"That is our affair; we chose you."

"But how did you know me—how get my name?"

"We read the letters in the public prints to which your name was attached, and we have formed a high opinion of your skill."

I called myself an idiot for having written to the newspapers. If this was the sort of notoriety I was to get by making my name widely known, better have continued obscure for ever.

Just then the conveyance stopped a second time. I heard the door open, and the two men descended.

"You have been long in coming, doctor."

I was startled by heavy breathing close to my ear; then the lady whispered—this time I thought with less acridness:

"Dr. Smith, I beg of you not to make any disturbance. So long as you are quiet and do as requested you have nothing to fear—not a hair of your head shall be injured. Refuse, and I dare not answer for the consequences. You are in desperate hands, who will brook no delay or opposition. I again beg of you to ask no questions; do as you are requested, and you will never repent. Remember!"

All this was said rapidly. The lady's mouth was close to my ear; I could feel her hot breath as she spoke. The concluding caution came sharp and clear, and it seemed to me almost tenderly.

Then she left the conveyance, and I heard the command:

"Get up, doctor; give me your hands."

I rose and stretched out my bound hands, which were at once grasped by the hand of some person.

I was led along a gravelly path; my nose informed me by the musty smell pervading the atmosphere that there were bushes and trees near.

Presently (and though the voice of the speaker was not the voice of the lady I had seen, yet I felt convinced it was the voice of a woman) I was told to be careful as there were steps to mount up.

Up we went, until I counted twenty; then I noticed a faint glimmer of light through the handkerchief fastened over my eyes. I heard a door cautiously closed, and I knew I was a prisoner in some house or building, and at the mercy of my gaolers.

I was now led over a stone floor and ushered into a

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carpeted room. Again I heard a door close behind me, and the click of a key turned in the lock. Then the hand that had guided me left my own, and I was standing alone.

I was not left to myself. The bandage was gently loosed from my eyes, my hands were set at liberty.

At first I realised only that I was in a large, magnificently-furnished bed-room, dimly lighted; nor was I left to take in more than a rapid glance. Then the lady who summoned me was once more at my side, and whispered:

"Look round."

At that moment lights were turned up. I looked round. My heart almost ceased beating at what I saw.

Fully twenty masked figures in men's habiliments stood not ten paces from me in a half circle with their right arms stretched out, and grasping in their hands pistols, ready cocked, pointed at my head. Twenty pistols ready to fire at me should I prove refractory.

The lights were suddenly lowered, and only one lamp burned brightly on a round, inlaid table that stood beside a bed.

"You see what you may expect," whispered the lady, "if you refuse to do what you are brought here for. On that bed lies a girl. She has had the misfortune to receive a bullet in her breast. It will be your duty to extract the bullet with as much skill and care as possible. Afterwards you will write out full instructions how to proceed with the wound, answer any questions you may be asked, and, your work being done and your fee paid, you will be conducted back to your home. I need not caution you to keep silent for ever as to this night's work. Should you ever reveal what you have done, or put the police on our track, we have the means of vengeance, and your life will be the forfeit! Come!"

She led me to the bed.

In all my experience up to now, I never beheld so beautiful a creature as the one before me. She lay on her back with her arms thrown over her head, her wealth of golden hair lying on the pillow. I cannot describe her features; it would be folly to attempt it. They were perfect as human features can be.

Her face was pale; indeed, but for the short, quick breathing, in the soft light thrown from the lamp, she might have been taken for some divine piece of statuary chiselled by a master hand.

She bore the operation quietly, patiently, with scarcely a moan. I verily believe I was the greater sufferer of the two.

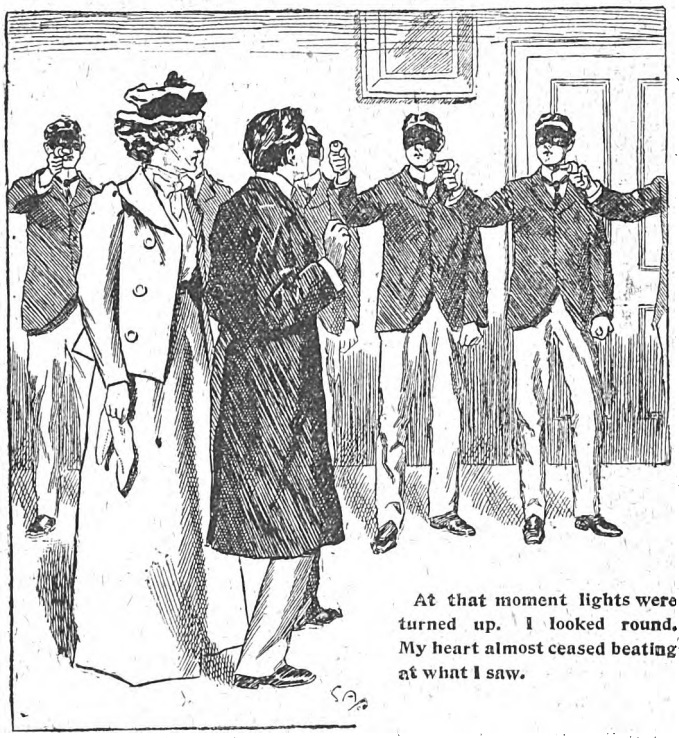
I had to probe deeply before I discovered the bullet; I felt her lovely form quiver; a slight moan left her lips, nothing more. When I had performed the task, examined the wound, and done what I could, she rewarded me with the sweetest smile that ever illumined the face of fair woman.

Pens, ink, and paper were brought me by the first lady, and I wrote full instructions—indeed by this time I had become deeply interested in my lovely patient—how to treat the wound, and what was to be her diet.

At the foot of the sheet I put these words:

"If any dangerous symptoms appear, do not fail to seek my aid. You are safe with me now and ever.—J.S., M.D."

"You have done your work well, doctor, for which I thank you—nay, I could almost fall on your neck and kiss you. She is my only child, and you may perhaps guess how I love her."



At that moment lights were turned up. I looked round. My heart almost ceased beating at what I saw.

"Madam," I said, "this has been a strange experience for me. I do not know who you are, nor the mode of your life; but I am glad to have rendered a service to that lovely creature whom you call your daughter. One request I should like to make."

"What is it?"

"Let me touch her cheek with my lips!"

The lady paused a moment. I saw her breast heave and swell as her dark eyes flashed upon me through her veil.

"Granted," she said; "but I beg you will do it quickly and unseen by the others present."

I turned to the bed, apparently to see that all was comfortable. I put my ear to her face, as though listening to her breathing. Then, for just one moment, my lips pressed her cheek.

Turning round I saw the veiled lady with the bandage ready for my eyes.

"Is it necessary?" I asked.

"It must be; I dare do no other," she answered.

Then I submitted to be blindfolded once more, but my hands were left free.

"Here is your fee—a hundred guineas," said the strange lady.

"A hundred guineas!" I exclaimed; "it is too much—ten would have been sufficient."

"You are welcome. Remember, we have bound you by no oath, but not a word to a living soul of what you have seen and done. I should be sorry to be your enemy."

"Madam, I am silent as the grave!"

I need not prolong my story by relating the return journey.

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I was taken back alone in the strange conveyance used to convey me thither.

* * * * *

Everybody old enough will remember the startling discovery made by the police, some fifteen years ago, of a band of female house-breakers.

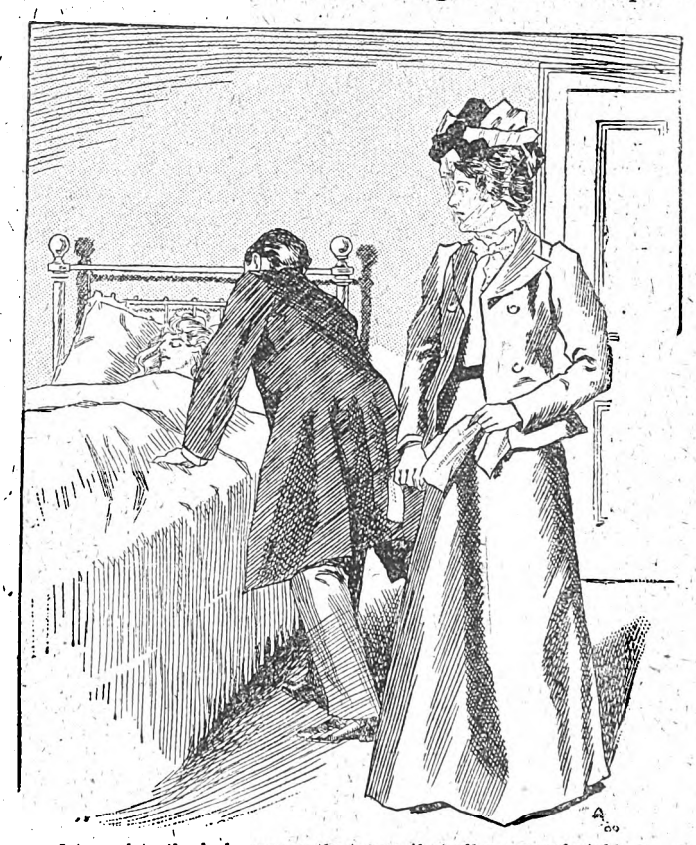
The whole country was roused to intense excitement by the revelations then made.

The newspapers for weeks provided the most thrilling accounts of the depredations the gang had committed, dressed in men's clothing—robbing gentleman's mansions and the better-class houses.

Only three of the gang were captured, an elderly woman and two young ones; the rest escaped, and nothing could persuade those captured to betray their companions in crime.

The elderly woman was said to belong to a Continental family of title, and it was supposed that she was the leader of the gang.

On the day of the trial I went to the court, for strong suspicion had taken possession of me that my strange episode some years back had a connection with the gang of female burglars. The court was crowded, but I managed to secure a position where I could get a good view of the dock.



I turned to the bed, apparently to see that all was comfortable.

When the prisoners were brought into the dock I at once recognised the face of the elder culprit! Casting her eyes round, they fell upon me. By the slight start she gave on seeing me, I knew she recognised me.

She gave a faint smile, put her fingers to her lips and wafted me a kiss.

So artfully was this done that even the lynx-eyed reporters failed to notice the action, and so missed what might have been a very romantic bit of news for the millions who read an account of the trial next day.

She and her two companions were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment, and so ended the great female burglar case.

I have often wondered what became of the fair creature whose cheeks I pressed with my lips for the first and last time when she lay so patient, and looking so beautiful, after my operation.

Did she die of her wound? If living, will she read what I have written?

If she reads my narrative, I hope she will pardon my giving to the public what has been locked up in my own breast so many years, the telling of which cannot bring harm to the gang of thieves who practised their unwomanly calling nearly a quarter of a century ago.

F. Derry.

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THE MAD MARE OF EYLAU.

It was in the autumn of 1805, when the officers of the Grand Army were making their preparations and completing their equipages for the battle of Austerlitz. I already had two good horses, but I was searching for a third and better one—a big-hearted charger. The latter was extremely difficult to find, for, prices were very high, and I had little money. But hazard served me marvellously.

I encountered a German scientist, named M. d'Aister, whom I had known when he was a professor at Sorèze. He had become preceptor to the children of a rich Swiss banker, M. Scherer, who was established in Paris, and associated with M. Finguerlin. M. d'Aister apprised me that M. Finguerlin, then very opulent and maintaining a vast establishment, had an extensive stable, one of the leading animals in which was a beautiful mare named Lisette, an excellent beast from Mecklenburg, of attractive appearance, light as a deerhound, and a very surefooted animal. She had but one defect, a terrible one and which was fortunately displayed but rarely. She bit like a bulldog, and threw herself furiously on persons who displeased her. It was on this account that M. Finguerlin had determined to sell her.

I offered a thousand francs, and Lisette became mine, although she had cost M. Finguerlin five thousand. For many months this beast gave me considerable trouble; it required four or five men to saddle her, and the only manner in which her bridle could be put on was by covering her eyes and fastening all four of her legs together. But once one was upon her back, she was found to be an admirable mount.

After she had belonged to me for some time, however, as she had already bitten a number of persons and had not even spared myself, I concluded to get rid of her.

About this time I took into my service a man named Francois Woirland.

He was warned of Lisette's bad character, and, before approaching her, he provided himself with an exceedingly hot leg of mutton, and when the beast threw herself upon him, he thrust the meat at her and she seized it between her teeth. It burnt her gums, her palate, and her tongue, so that she immediately dropped it, and from this moment she was perfectly submissive to Woirland, whom she dared not attack. I employed the same means and obtained a similar result. She thus became easy of approach to myself and my domestic, and even became slightly more tractable for the grooms of the staff, whom she saw every day, but woe to strangers who passed too close to her.

Such was the mare upon which I was mounted at Eylau at the moment when the *débris* of the army corps of Marshal Augereau, crushed by a hailstorm of grapeshot and bullets, were endeavouring to reunite near the big cemetery. You will probably remember that the Fourteenth Regiment of the line occupied a solitary position upon a small hill, which they could not quit except by order from the Emperor.

The snow having ceased to fall momentarily, we could perceive this intrepid regiment, surrounded by the enemy, waving its eagle in the air to show that it still held out, and asking for aid.

The Emperor, touched by the courage and devotion of these fine soldiers, resolved to make an attempt to save them, and ordered Marshal Augereau to send an officer to them.

The latter was to tell them to quit the hill, form a small square, and work their way toward us, while a brigade of Cavalry would march to meet them and second their efforts.

It was before the grand charge made by Murat; it was almost impossible to execute the Emperor's will, because a cloud of Cossacks separated us from the Fourteenth of the line. It became evident that the officer who should be sent towards the unfortunate regiment would be killed or captured before reaching them. However, the Emperor's order was positive, and the Marshal was obliged to conform to it. It was the usage in the Imperial Army for the aides-de-camp to arrange themselves in order at fixed distances from their general, the one at the head attending to the order of the moment, then placing himself at the rear when his mission was fulfilled. Thus each carried the orders in turn, and the dangers were equally divided.

A brave captain of the engineers named Froissard, who, although not an aide-de-camp, was attached to the marshal's staff, found himself at the head of the line, and was charged to carry the order to the Fourteenth. Froissard sped away at a gallop. We lost sight of him in the midst of the Cossacks, and we never saw him again nor learnt what became of him.

The marshal, seeing that the Fourteenth made no movement, sent an officer named David. He met the same fate as Froissard, and we heard no more of him. It is probable that the two men, having been killed and despoiled, were not recognised among the numerous

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corpses with which the field was covered. For the third time the marshal called for the officer on duty. It was my turn!

On seeing the son of his old friend approach, and, I dare add, his favourite aide-de-camp, the good marshal's figure shook and his eyes filled with tears, because he could not dissimulate the fact that he was sending me to an almost certain death. But the Emperor's orders must be obeyed; I was a soldier, and they could not make one of my comrades go in my place, even if I would have suffered such a thing, which would have dishonoured me. But, in making a sacrifice of my life, I considered it my duty to take all possible precautions to save it if possible.

I had remarked that the two officers who had gone before me had carried their sabres in their hands, which led me to believe that they had endeavoured to defend themselves against the Cossacks. This was useless, according to my idea, because it compelled them to arrest their progress to combat against a multitude of enemies, who finished by overwhelming them. I accordingly conducted myself otherwise and, allowing my sabre to remain in the scabbard, I considered myself as a rider who, wishing to win a prize at a race, directs himself as rapidly as possible and by the shortest line towards the desired goal, without occupying himself with what is upon the right or left of his road. Now, my goal being the little hill occupied by the fourteenth of the line, I resolved to proceed thither without paying any attention to the Cossacks.

This method succeeded perfectly. Lisette, lighter than a swallow and rather flying than running, seemed to devour space, leaping over mounds of stones, broken gun-carriages and hardly extinct bivouac fires.

Thousands of Cossacks were scattered over the plain. The first who perceived me acted like hunters in a game-drive, who, seeing a hare rise before them, mutually announced his presence by their cries. But none of these Cossacks tried to stop me, in the first place on account of the extreme rapidity of my flight, and also probably because, being in such great numbers, each of them thought it would be impossible for me to evade his comrades further on. So well did my plan work that I reached the Fourteenth without either myself or my excellent mare having received the least scratch.

I found the Fourteenth formed into a square upon the summit of the hill; but as the slope of the ground was very slight, the enemy's cavalry had been able to execute several charges against the French regiment. These had all been repulsed, and the brave little band was surrounded by so many of the enemy's dead, both men and horses, that they formed a species of rampant which thenceforth rendered the position nearly inaccessible to cavalry.

I transmitted to the officer in command the order to quit his position and endeavour to join the body of the army, he observed to me that the enemy's artillery, which had for over an hour been firing upon the Fourteenth, had caused such losses that the handful of soldiers remaining would be infallibly exterminated if they descended into the plain. Furthermore, he had not time to prepare for the execution of this movement, as a column of Russian infantry was marching upon him, and was then not more than a hundred yards away from us.

"I see no means of saving the regiment," said the chief of the battalion. "Return to the Emperor, give him the farewell of the Fourteenth of the line, which has faithfully executed his orders, and carry to him the eagle which he gave to us, and which we can no longer defend; it would be too painful for us, while dying, to see it fall into the enemy's hands."

The commander then handed over to me the eagle, which the soldiers—glorious remnant of this intrepid regiment—saluted for the last time with cries of "*Vive l'Empereur.*"

The eagles of the infantry were very heavy, and their weight was augmented by a big, strong oaken handle, upon the summit of which they were fixed. The length of this handle embarrassed me considerably, and, as the staff deprived of its eagle could not constitute a trophy for the enemy, I resolved, with the commander's assent, to break it.

But before this could be accomplished the column of Russian infantry, reached the hill, and threw themselves furiously upon the feeble remnant of the unfortunate Fourteenth, the soldiers of which had lived for many days upon potatoes and melted snow. Our brave soldiers defended themselves valiantly with their bayonets, and when the square had been pierced they grouped themselves into various clusters, and sustained for a long time this unequal combat.

During this frightful *mêlée*, many of our men, in order not to be struck down from behind, backed up against the flanks of my mare, who, contrary to her usual habits, remained quiet. If I had been able to move, I would have urged her forward, in order to withdraw with the eagle from the field; but it was absolutely impossible for me to press my legs together so as to make the animal understand my wishes. Not only did they fight all round me, but taking me for the chief of the French, because I alone was on horseback, they made me the object of their special attention, numerous balls constantly whistling past my ears.

Among the French who had backed up against the left flank of my mare was a quartermaster whom I knew, having often seen him in the marshal's tent. This man, attacked and wounded by several grenadiers, fell under Lisette, and seized one of my legs in attempt to raise himself, when a Russian soldier tried to pierce his breast. The grenadier lost his equilibrum, and the point of his bayonet, badly directed, sunk into my mare's thigh. Recalled to her ferocious instincts by the pain, Lisette precipitated herself upon the Russian, and he was soon a mangled corpse.

Then, throwing herself furiously into the midst of the combatants, Lisette, kicking and biting, overturned everything that opposed her passage, and soon carried him out of the struggle to the base of the little hill. Then, taking the road by which she had come, she

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directed her way toward the cemetery of Eylau at a rapid gallop.

Thanks to the hussar's saddle in which I was seated, I was able in all this turmoil to keep my place upon the mare's back, but a new danger awaited me. The snow had begun to fall again, and the big flakes obscured the air. I had gone nearly to Eylau when I found myself in front of a battalion of the old Imperial Guard, who, not being able to distinguish objects at any distance, mistook me for a Russian officer leading a cavalry charge.

Immediately the entire battalion fired upon me. My cloak and my saddle were riddled with balls; but I was not wounded, nor was my mare, who continued her rapid course, traversing the three ranks of the battalion with the same ease that a snake passes through a hedge.

But this last flight had exhausted Lisette's forces. She had lost a quantity of blood, one of the large veins of her thigh, having been severed, and, all at once, the poor beast sank down and rolled to one side, I rolling to the other.

Stretched out upon the snow among the mass of dead and dying, unable to move in any way, I insensibly and painlessly lost consciousness. It seemed as though some one were rocking me softly in a cradle. Finally I swooned completely, and was not even reanimated by eighty squadrons of Murat, going to the charge, passing near me, and perhaps over me.

* * * * *

When I regained my senses after being unconscious for four hours I found myself being carefully tended by my own servant while greatest of joys, the glorious eagle lay safe at my side.

My brave charger was found where she fell. If a reminder of the service she rendered me is needed I have it in the shape of one of her hoofs which lies, mounted, always on my writing table.

Thus ends the story of the Mad Mare of Eylau.

E. Howard.

TOLD IN THE SINGLE MEN'S HUT. (A True Story.)

The single men's hut in Australia is a rough shanty, with bunks arranged round pretty much the same as they are on an ordinary steamer, albeit not so luxurious. Here men herd, and feed, and sleep, and smoke, and yarn after dark. Imagine such a place if you can, and you can easily believe that many yarns of peril and sudden death get told in a place of this description.

"How did you get that big scar on your forehead?" said one of the chums to me.

Naturally I said "Don't bother."

"But tell us, old man, for there's always a yarn attached to a scar, and it's a beastly night. Come! tell us."

"Well," I said, "some years ago I was skylarking, doing some boundary riding, and too often going to a certain roadside inn, to which a pair of lovely blue eyes attracted me a precious sight more than did the drink. At that time I was riding a wild brute of a mare—as wild as they make them. She had been handed over to me because at that time I never cared what I rode, and, in fact, as you know, I don't care much now.

"The night I left the inn was unusually black; but with the kiss of the blue-eyed one still warm on my lips, I swung myself into my saddle, and set the mare going to some tune. She was very rough at first and seemed inclined for a fight, so I sat down for it, and dug in my spurs for all I was worth, and banged it into her well with the handle of my stock whip, and eventually started her, in what I thought, was the right direction.

"She took hold of the bit as if she meant to pull my arms out; but I stuck it, and eventually got on better terms and we went along very well.

"Now begins the story really. I had just loosed myself in the saddle and lit my pipe, thinking only to have a quiet canter home, when the mare slid up on her haunches and made a dead stop. I didn't. Clean over head I must have gone into space. She, with her equine instinct, had discovered the shaft of a disused mine, and down that shaft I went, quite fifty feet, I should think. Why didn't it kill me? Because there was a bed of soft earth at the bottom and upon this I fell, but in falling, I hit my head against some old timber, and half skinned it.

"How long I lay before I came to myself again, I don't know.

"When that event did take place, I was horrified at my situation. Drenched with blood, with barely any-

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thing upon me except matches and about a pint of cold tea in my flask,—I always carry it in preference to grog, although I'm no teetotaler—this was all I had to face the music with.

"The first day I didn't take much notice of it, being too much hurt. On the second, however, I began to explore the old workings, with the result of finding a small pool of particularly filthy water. Still even this was a little godsend in one way. A man can go a long time on water. But now another horror came on—I could not sleep, and of food I had none, and the horrible position in which I was, got on my nerves to such an extent, that, I began to tremble in every limb. Moreover my head was very painful, and I must have been somewhat delirious.

"Daylight found me very weak, not only from my previous exertions and want of sleep, but from hunger. Three nights had passed without my eating, though, up to the present time, I had not felt the want of anything in consequence of being excited by my endeavour to escape. On rising from a mound of earth, which had now been my bed for three nights, I found my knees giving way and shaking from the combined effects of cold and hunger. I felt so weak that it was with difficulty I could crawl across the chamber of the mine with the intention of exploring the workings to see if there were any means of escape through them.

"You will say, 'Why did you not think of this before?' In the first place I had expended all my matches the first night, and then again, feeling that the only way of escape was by the shaft, all my energies had been concentrated in that direction; but now that failed I was induced to seek for some old timber props or slabs out of which I could make a sort of scaffold.

"Entering one of the passages on my hands and knees and groping cautiously along the ground—in case there might be another shaft—I arrived at the end, and finding nothing returned with a weary sigh into the daylight that streamed down the shaft.

"Two more dark arches showed as many passages to be explored, so I at once commenced to crawl into the entrance of one of them. I had hardly advanced a couple of yards when my knees struck against something soft, and at the same time my hand encountered a coil like a snake. With a shriek I scrambled back to the place whence I started, and for a long time could not recover from the effects of the fright. I suppose I fainted, for when I came to myself the daylight was dying away, and the place I was in was deep in gloom.

"That it was a snake I had tumbled against I felt convinced, which had like myself tumbled into this trap; and it was a matter of wonder to me that I had not encountered crowds of these brutes before. Death by the bite of a snake! Was I to come to this after all? Perhaps it would be better than dying from starvation, but the horror of it! I had heard bushmen who had been bitten by snakes describe the sensations experienced after receiving the bite, in which they said that barring the sharp pin-like prick they had no other pain.

"After a time a numbness spread over their limbs and they commenced to feel sleepy, but were kept awake by being violently made to run about, and this action assisted by copious draughts of raw brandy had enabled them to resist the poison. Was not this quietly dropping off to sleep better than the pangs of starvation? Yes! Oh, a thousand times better, and with a prayer to Heaven I crawled into the passage again, and clutched—not the snake, thank Heaven, but my stock-whip, which had, I suppose, bounded into the place when I fell down the shaft. With a cry of delight which echoed through the dreary place, I seized the whip and hugged it to my breast, for I saw in it my deliverer from the horrible tomb. It being too dark to make use of it that night, I again lay down, but with very different feelings from what I had experienced the night before. I was then suffering all the agonies of hunger and thirst combined, which were gradually robbing me of sense and life, now no thought of hunger or thirst troubled me as I again lay down upon the bed of earth.

"I looked for the coming day with an eagerness that prevented my sleeping, and set my brain whirling with excitement. Oh! what would I not have given for a smoke; but I had searched my pockets dozens of times before unsuccessfully, for I was certain I had both pipe and tobacco when I left the public house. Then what had become of them? I racked my brains without receiving any help from them, for everything appeared as having happened at such a distant date, that I could not make up my mind whether I had left the 'pub' four years ago or four days.

"At length the welcome light streamed down the shaft, and, after several trials, I once more rose to my feet. But how shaky my knees had become and how weak I felt. Shall I have strength enough to throw the lash of the whip up the shaft? With tremulous footsteps I crawled along the wall until I got just under the opening, and then gathering the twelve-foot lash into a coil, I essayed to throw it up the shaft. I must have been mad at that time, though of course I fancied I was still in my right senses. And although some years have passed since it occurred, I often in my dreams try to effect the impossible feat of making a twelve foot lash catch in the timbers around the mouth of a shaft fifty feet above my head. How long this extraordinary delusion lasted I have no idea. I must have gradually lost my senses for when I came to myself I was lying in my own bed which I had given up all hopes of ever seeing again.

"It appears that my horse had come back home early on the morning of the sixth day, without saddle or bridle which I suppose he had managed to get rid of when wandering through the bush. His appearance had then alarmed the owner of the station, who, up to that time had thought that I was riding round the boundaries or mobbing up cattle. When the saddleless horse arrived with stains on his coat showing a long want of combing, he had become alarmed, and riding over to the village I had left, was astonished to hear that I had been gone for six days. Calling for volunteers, and taking dogs with them, they had tracked me to the shaft down which I had fallen as was shown by the horse's footmarks where he had slid forward in trying to stop. How to get down to see if I was there was the question, for though they shouted again and again, no answer was returned, as by that time I was insensible. Taking off their bridles, the reins were soon made into a rope, and one of their number was lowered down. He found me, and called out to his friends that I was dead. However, fastening the reins around me, the men on the surface soon had me on the grass, when perceiving that just a glimmer of life remained, they cut down a few saplings and extemporized a stretcher to carry me home.

"It was a long time before I came round, but thanks to the kind and gentle nursing of the Owner's wife, I did at length recover; but never as long as I live shall I forget the horror of those days passed in the old mine.

"That's all, mates, about the scar on my forehead."

C. M. R.

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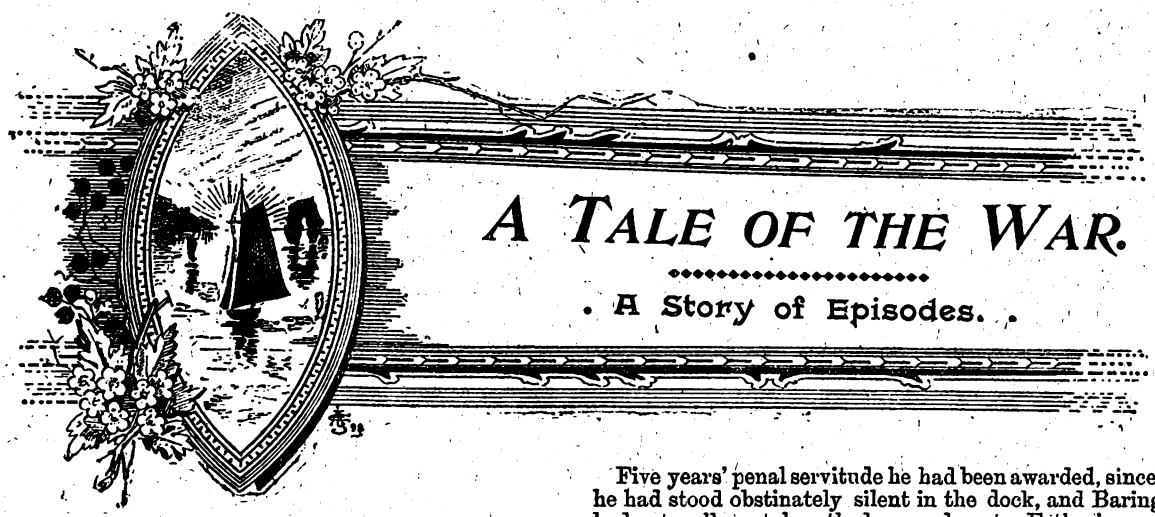


A TALE OF THE WAR.

A Story of Episodes.

IT was very wet weather, and the exterior of the prison at Bolter's Sands seemed more dreary than the interior, so that James Fosdyke shivered as he stepped across the threshold into fresh air and freedom. His alert face was not that of a criminal, though the lines were branded and deepened on it, as though they had been seared by a hot iron. He was a man of middle height, spare and lean, with the shapely hands of a skilled mechanic, and eyes that could gauge the length and quality of a plank of oak for the carving.

Five years before, he had been a cabinet-maker in the small town of Westfield, with a prosperous business, and an only sister who kept his house for him, until the day that pretty Esther Davey should come to it as his wife. He had worked hard to make his home charming in every way with deft contrivings that should constitute her the most envied woman in the street. Every night, after working hours, he had laboured at the pretty suite of furniture that was to adorn her room, until chair and table had at last satisfied his critical fancy.

He remembered that time hungrily now as he stood staring with wide eyes at the long road that lay before him, ending in London and the crowd which would swallow him up. How pretty Esther Davey was—with her flower-like face and fair hair, so child-like and appealing, so fresh and gay! Poor love—poor little Esther—he had seen the crown of fair hair low in the dust before him—the blameless coronal of a girl's fame smirched and soiled.

Another memory darted into being with a flash of vigour that was like a stab—the memory of Roland Baring, the son of the rich banker of Westfield, the threads of whose life had become inextricably mingled with Essie's—to his detriment and her shame. He clenched his fists now as he remembered the smooth, handsome face of the young soldier, home on leave, and idly ready for any adventure that offered itself.

When the whole sad story had come out, he, James Fosdyke, had gone to Baring's home, had sought an interview with him, and in white fury had struck him in the face. The blow had lodged on the temple, and for many days the young man lay hovering between life and death, till the balance of the scale shifted, and he came back to existence again—to help to put Fosdyke in gaol for attempted murder.

Five years' penal servitude he had been awarded, since he had stood obstinately silent in the dock, and Baring had naturally not breathed a word as to Esther's connection with the case. It had therefore appeared to the jury that some trivial quarrel between the two men had ended in a horrible revenge, and Fosdyke was convicted without the aid of any extenuating circumstances. The satisfaction that he had saved Esther's good name in the eyes of the world was marred for him by the look of returning health in the face of Mr. Baring, whose satisfaction at the verdict was not good to see.

And thus it was, that at the age of nine and twenty, James Fosdyke stood without hope or friends, outside the prison walls. His sister Rose had died of the shame, his house and business were no more, so that there seemed no particular reason why he should return to Westfield; but, rather, as his inclination led him, begin life in a fresh place with new sphere of work.

The red of the setting sun was upon the wide plain of Bolter's Sands, far away he could see the November haze upon the dull sea, closing in a dead foggy night for any ships coming up Channel.

"I will be even with him before I die," he said, lifting his hand to Heaven with a passion that lifted him out of everyday life and set him on a pinnacle of tragedy. "Three lives has he spoilt for his own pleasure. I will be even with him."

Like Shylock, he might have said, "I have an oath in Heaven," but, unlike Shylock, it seemed to him that. Heaven should have no part in a compact that was unholy.

Then, pulling up the collar of his coat, he set out up the London Road, to be lost in the mist and the darkness.

* * * * *

A doss house in the East-end of London is no charming abode, but it was to one, in the particularly insalubrious street that went by the name of Parker's Rents, in the Whitechapel district, that James Fosdyke had drifted by the next autumn. His want of success had been from no special fault on his part, but rather that misfortune seemed to dog his footsteps whenever he set his hand to any special work. He had become disheartened, feeling that the prison taint upon him had branded a seal upon his forehead, setting him, like Cain, apart from other men. Over the kitchen fire, a group of tramps were busy cooking their supper of some

savoury mess, that smelt hotly of fat and garlic, while half a dozen others, who had not the price of a meal about them, watched the frizzling pan, like unclean birds of prey.

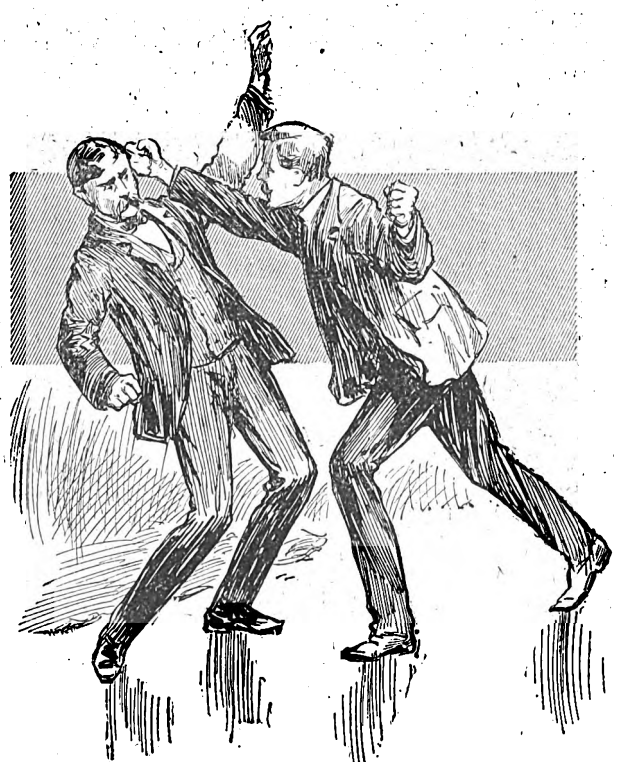
In a corner, shaded from the flaring naphtha lamp, sat two men of a better class, James Fosdyke and an acquaintance, who, by force of circumstances, had drifted into friendship. Of the same height and colouring, they seemed to bear a resemblance to one another, that ceased with one glance at the disease-wasted features of Fosdyke's friend, and the firmer, healthier face of the mechanic himself. They were very silent in the horrid din and clamour of the place where profanity and foul language were the sign manual of the *habitué*, and when Fosdyke's friend spoke at last, it was with the weary accent of a man who has long ago accounted hope as one of the lost possessions that time could never restore to him.

"No supper, Jem? I'm thinking it'll not be on account of appetite this time."

"I'm not broke," said Fosdyke. "I've five shillings, but when that's done, it's a case of the Thames or priggin'."

"It's a case of a coffin with me, anyway, whether work'us or doss'ouse. You'd never have thought I was a soldier once, eh, Jem? They're callin' out the Reserves of the old regiment, too, to-morrow, but it'll not be Ned Thomas as'll answer his name in Fleetwood Barracks when the reservists of the Dublin Fusiliers come shufflin' in."

"No, I reckon you're booked for another journey by another transport," returned Fosdyke, not unkindly.



In white fury James Forsdyke had struck him in the face.

"Jem," the voice was hoarse and excited, "I've one thing to leave, as I care about more'n the world—a sister. She wasn't right in her back from the first—queer and half-growed——" and he paused with a cough that shook him cruelly.

"What is the good of tellin' me, Ned? Do I look like a chap as can put my hand in my pocket and set your sister in a mansion?"

"No—but Jem—you've five shillings, and I've—just my papers—and Molly might set 'erself up as a flower girl, or a match hawker, with the money."

"What do you mean?"

"There's no call for you to be fierce about it. You and I passed the honest stage long ago, Jem. What use is my papers and things to me, dyin' of the decline, but to you they'd be new life—new hopes—and Molly'd be glad of the five shillin's."

"If I was caught?" said Fosdyke, breathing hard.

The other leant his lean arms on the table, and looked into his chum's face with deathly earnestness.

"You'd never be—none of the old regiment has seen me for years—since I left—and you're the same height, Jem, and the same build as me."

"Heavens! To begin life again—to have another chance!"

The groan came from the man's soul, and his agony surprised the other, looking at him curiously. One of the tramps swore furiously as a new-comer, blind drunk, lurching in, nearly upsetting the tripe in the pan.

"I'll do it and thank you."

Fosdyke rose and clutched at the dirty papers held out to him.

"Tell Molly—you saved a soul alive—and—for heaven's sake, old chap, go into the 'ouse to die—it's better than the streets."

He took off his waistcoat with a quick gesture—it would sell for something—and laid a little canvas bag on the table, from which he took two half-crowns, a pair of gold sleeve-links, and a battered silver locket, from which he first abstracted a curl of yellow hair.

"They're all yours," he said, "for Molly. I've no use for 'em now, and they'll maybe make dying a bit easier for you." Leaning over his friend, he took his hand in a tight grip. "Good-bye," he said, "good-bye."

"S'long," said the other, with a feeble attempt at a laugh. "When I was scene-shiftin' for the Christmas pantomime, they used to say: 'Exit James Fosdyke—hey, presto, Ned Thomas appears.'

"Aye—exit James Fosdyke—it'll be a bed over my head and a ration in my mouth, anyway, and I once got as 'igh as a corporal in our Volunteer corps, so I knows the trick of the thing. Good-bye."

And the new Reserve man was gone, while the old one sat looking at his newly acquired wealth, till the tears welled up slowly into his aching eyes, and, rising, he limped away up the street to Molly's attic.

* * * * *

Life on a troopship for three weeks at a stretch has its disadvantages, but to private "Ned Thomas" every hardship was a luxury, every privation a blessing. He had fallen into his place in the ranks without the slightest difficulty, and now that the Dublins were forging their way up country from Durban to intercept the Boers at Estcourt, he had become so much at ease with his position and duties, that his life might

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have been spent in soldiering. When questioned as to his means of livelihood since he joined the Reserves, he always replied that he had been down on his luck, and as so many of his companions appeared to have suffered from the same complaint, his statements passed unchallenged.

They were within sight of the Boer laager before he had had leisure to think and wonder over the chance that had brought him here, and it was the random firing from an enemy's reconnoitring party that made him first realise the sternness of the situation. War was such a light word in peaceful England, bandied from lip to lip, that he had never paused to remember that it meant hard work, horrible sights, and all the danger and excitement attendant on hard fighting.

He had no fear for himself, only wonder as to what the day might bring forth. He sat by the tent door that evening, thinking, with his hands folded across his knees, waiting for "Reveille" to sound. The long day died away across the plain, tinging the peaks of the mountains and the spurs of rock ridges with fire.

There was another regiment lying a little further off, and he could see the twinkle of their lights, and hear the subdued clatter of voices. He remembered that moment next day, when they were in the thick of the fight, and Boer and Englishman had met in a deadly *melée*, from whence there was no escape. He fought like a madman, feeling that in action lay escape from thought, and the only way of atoning for what was at best a fraud.

The sun waned to its setting upon the fierce fight. He had flung himself upon bearded Boer and bronzed Free-Stater, and where quarters were too close for the work that the Martini did so well, fought with stock and barrel as best he might.

The private lifted the officer in strong arms that cradled him like a child, and began hurrying back to the camp.

Just at sundown, when the day was almost over, from the other camp away across the veld that had kept the left flank of the enemy engaged, emerged a horse and its rider. The horse—a bright bay—was fretting at its bit, but at the touch of the spur, he sprang forward with a bound. No doubt he was the bearer of some message from the regiment that lay under the spur of the hill, and each man of the "Dublins" held his breath at the sight of the dancing horse and rider, who had to cross the enemy's very line of fire. There was not much doubt as to the outcome of so forlorn a hope, for a shower of Mauser bullets brought the bright bay to the ground in horrible quivering, death agony, and his rider beneath him, where he lay motionless.

One glance Private Ned Thomas cast at the fighting, struggling mass of men, and one at the inert black mass of horse and rider on the sun-scorched grass. There was the quiver of a muscle, the faint movement of hand or foot, and without a thought he darted away towards the open, with the wild, mad thought of saving a life that had been brave to recklessness.

He bore a charmed life, for the bullets fell round

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him like hail, touching no part of him or his uniform, but it was with a feeling of awful wonder that he fell upon his knees by the side of the wounded man, and drew him away from the heavy body of his charger, that gripped him like a vice.

He was not dead, for his eyes opened as the Private wiped the blood from his face.

"You're a bit knocked out of time, sir. Good Heavens!"

The cheery tone in which Thomas had begun to speak died away with a hoarse groan, as he realised that he had risked his life for the man who was the worst enemy the world had held for him!

"So it's you, is it?" he said again, fiercely, passionately. "This is the day as I've prayed for night and morning for six years, and it's come at last, you false, sneaking hound, you with your lying, cheating ways, and your eyes, as looked away a pure innocent soul, whiter now than yours'll ever be. You've come to your last moment, and I'm only waiting to decide whether to leave you here and go back, and say as you were dead, or wipe out your life with a blow from the stock of my carbine."

The deathly lips moved, while the eyes, in haunting, hopeless terror held him.

"I'm shot—in the back—can't move—Fosdyke—surely the bitterness of death is past."

"Even the Devil can quote Scripture. There's Esther a-standin' between us."

The battered carbine was raised with a steady aim, and if ever murder looked out of any man, it did at that moment out of Fosdyke's blood-shot, strained eyeballs, and the man below him flinched as he had never done, even at Elandslaagte.

"For Esther's sake—Fosdyke! I will marry her—when I get back."

The hand faltered, and the carbine dropped with a thud.

"Do you swear it?"

"I swear it by the Cross," clamoured the broken, wounded voice.

Steady as a rock the private of the "Dublins" rose and lifted the officer to his knees, then to his breast, in strong arms that cradled him like a child, and began hurrying back with his burden to the shelter of the friendly camp, from which a dozen eager men were running with offers of help. The first of them caught Captain Baring from the staggering, bleeding figure of the man who had braved a whole line of Boer bullets.

"You've earned the Victoria Cross, lad," he said, "and you'll get it too."

But Private "Ned Thomas" of the "Dublins" fell upon his face at the man's feet, without an answer, and they said afterwards that he must have been hit mortally just as he rose to carry Captain Baring back to camp, and that for the last few yards of the race he had been practically a dead man!

Prison and starvation flung behind him, he had won fame and honour in the moment of his dying, and had lost them in the winning, to find them again on the other side.

Roland Baring did not marry Esther Davey, for she was dead before he was able to return to his native country.

But if any man says that the life of James Fosdyke was thrown away, he may have the satisfaction of knowing that I can give him the lie direct.

A. E. C. Weigall.

£250 * *

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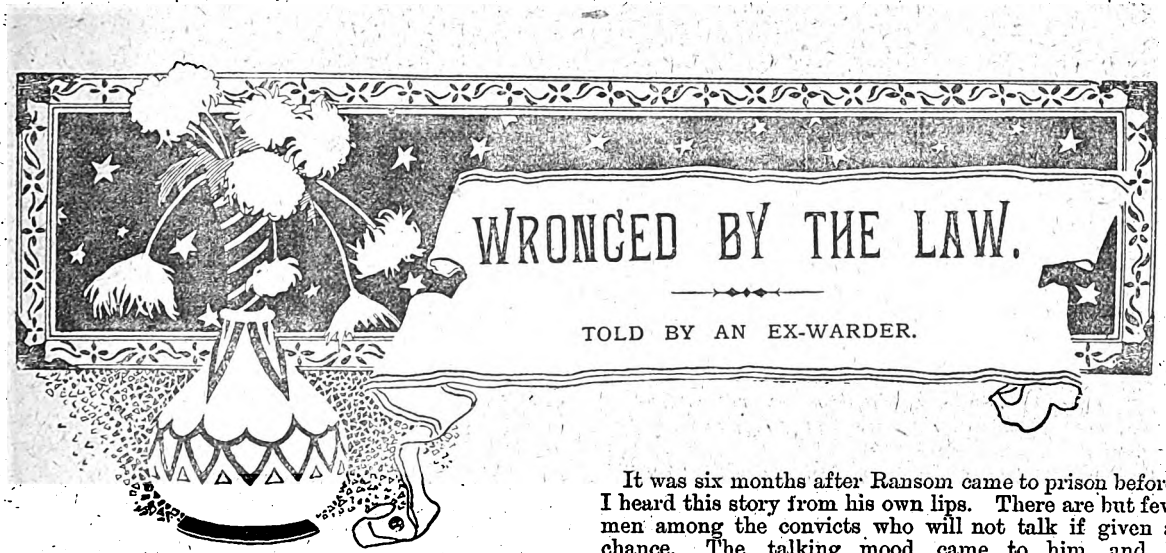

WRONGED BY THE LAW.

TOLD BY AN EX-WARDER.

Now and then you read of the case of a man, executed or sent to prison on circumstantial evidence, who turns out to have been wronged by the law, and we all know that certain men, if drafted into the jury box, will refuse to convict on such evidence.

One need not be greatly troubled with doubts and fears, however. Convictions which wrong the innocent are very few, and circumstantial evidence who turns out that can be adduced. While it rarely brings harm to an honest man, it can weave such a web around a guilty one that there is hardly a chance of escape.

Twice in my life I have had to do with criminals convicted on circumstantial evidence, and that they were not guilty of the crime attributed to them and were unjustly convicted and sentenced was in a measure their own fault.

There came to us, when I was assistant warden in one of our convict prisons, a man named Ransom, who had been a merchant and a prominent citizen in the town of Colwell.

He was about forty years old, well educated and gentle in his manners, and after a time he was made book-keeper in the office.

He had been tried and convicted of setting fire to his shop for the sake of the insurance money. That was not the worst of it; a clerk in his employ who slept on the premises had been presumably burnt alive, and Ransom received a sentence of fifteen years.

At the trial it was proved that he was hard up financially; that his stock was over-insured; that creditors were pressing him; that he left the shop at nine o'clock one evening and flames broke out soon after.

For a couple of hours he could not be found, and when he did appear he was greatly agitated and upset.

The prisoner made what was called a good defence, but the lame point in it was that he could not account for his time between nine and e even o'clock of that evening.

He first claimed to be at home, and when this was shown to be false, he told other untruths.

He, of course, claimed that the fire was an accident, and had he told the truth, and the whole truth, about his movements, it is doubtful if he could have been convicted. A bit of good detective work would have put a different face on the matter at the outset.

It was six months after Ransom came to prison before I heard this story from his own lips. There are but few men among the convicts who will not talk if given a chance. The talking mood came to him and I encouraged him to go ahead and make a clean breast of it.

He might not have told me all had he not heard that day that his wife had renounced him and gone back to her parents, thus breaking him all up and making him feel that he must tell his story to somebody to relieve his over-burdened mind.

He told me everything and concealed nothing, and when he had finished I was satisfied that he had told the truth and was a wronged man.

He had a brother who was quite well to do, and who strongly believed in his innocence, and in the course of a fortnight we had a detective at work.

I said that a clerk had been presumably burnt with the premises. This was looked upon by nearly every one as a fact, and it entered into the case greatly to the man's prejudice and that without even a search of the ruins for the bones of the victim.

The young man had gone to his room over the shop at eight o'clock, and he was not seen after the fire.

Owing to there being a lot of barrels of oil in the cellar it had been a fierce fire, and there had been an explosion that had shaken the walls down. The clerk's bones were no doubt under the heap of debris, but they had not been found and identified.

That was a queer thing, you will say, and so it was, but the prosecution would take no steps as the real charge was arson, and so it was left to be assumed that the clerk perished in the flames.

"Did he or did he not?" was the first question to be solved by the detective.

Every shovel of debris was taken from the cellar after a week's hard work, but no bones were found. If the young man was burnt some evidence ought to exist. He was known to have a revolver in his room, and to carry a silver handled pocket knife. Neither of these were found. He likewise had half a dozen rare old coins, but not one was found in the ruins.

His best suit of clothes had metal buttons, but not a button of the sort was discovered. In a week the detective was satisfied that the clerk was not burnt with the shop. If alive where had he gone to, and why did he go away at all?

There was another clerk who had not gone, and after a vigorous pumping he was led to say that he believed his fellow clerk had been guilty of stealing and had run away. In the next ten days he was found at his uncle's house two hundred miles away, and two hours after he was

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found, he owned up that he had embezzled about £150 in less than three months, and had fled because he knew the merchant was overhauling his accounts. He left the shop about nine o'clock that night, and knew that Ransom was below.

As to the fire, he had not heard of it, but remembered that he had left a candle burning in his room.

When the detective returned to Colwell and talked with those who first discovered the fire, he found they were agreed that the flames worked downward instead of upward, proving that the fire started from above.

Where had Ransom put in the time from nine to eleven o'clock? He had already told me. He had visited the house of a woman in the outskirts with whom he was infatuated, but nothing would make him admit it to disgrace his wife and children.

He believed that he set the shop on fire by accident, and when arrested he wanted to conceal so much that the case looked clear against him. Inside of three months from the time we began work he was at liberty, but he was financially ruined, broken in spirits and wandered off west to die in the course of two or three years.

A straight story from him at the outset, corroborated by the woman, would have resulted in his discharge, as the over insurance was shown to have been the result of a misunderstanding with the agent. In seeking to avoid a village scandal Ransom had dishonoured himself and family, and suffered imprisonment.

Another case of being wronged by the law, which I also discovered, was that of a female convict sentenced for life for the murder of her husband by poisoning. This was altogether a case of circumstantial evidence. She was the wife of a farmer, and although they had lived together for fifteen years they had always quarrelled and jangled. On a certain occasion she had been heard to wish him dead; she had inquired about poison; she had wished herself dead.

One day the woman was bitten by a neighbour's dog. She made threats of what she would do, and a bitter quarrel was the result. A week later she called at the village chemist shop and complained that her house was infested with rats and bought a quantity of strychnine.

A few days later there was another quarrel and she left the house. On the highway she met a neighbour and told her all the details and added that she had "fixed" her husband so that there would never be another quarrel. Two days after that he was found dead in the house, and a post-mortem proved that he had been poisoned by strychnine. Suspicion fell upon the wife, of course, and when her trial came on her lawyer made but a poor defence. It was a plain, straight case, and the jury were not over half-an-hour in bringing in a verdict of guilty.

Mrs. Sherman, as the woman was named, had been in prison a year or more before she told her story to the matron. Each and every prisoner has a story to tell, and that story always makes the teller innocent of crime, but one learns to sift out and retain the truths if there are any.

The woman seemed to have awakened from a trance and to realise for the first time where she was. While she admitted buying the poison, she declared it was for the dog, and that he had really been put out of the way. What she meant by "fixing" her husband was that she knew he stole a lot of wheat from a neighbour and could be sent to prison for it. He had the poison in his possession, knew what she bought it for and placed it in the meat thrown to the dog. How he came to take it was more than she could tell, unless with the intent to commit suicide. She had been gone two days when he was found dead, and the doctors agreed that he had not been dead more than twelve hours when the body was discovered.

There was a point there for her but it was not worked out. She gave me many other points not related above, and as a result I set a detective to work on my own account.

The first thing he had found was that the dog had been poisoned at the time she stated. The next was that about thirty bushels of wheat had been stolen at the date she gave and that her husband rested under suspicion as the thief.

The wife left home on a Wednesday morning. The detective soon hunted up several people who had seen her husband about the place even up to nine o'clock on Thursday morning.

Not one of these people had been called at the trial. If they had been the prosecution might have claimed that the poison was so placed that the man did not get hold of it until next day. The detective therefore went further.

It took him two weeks to do it, but he hunted down a tramp who had called at the farmhouse about ten o'clock on Thursday morning.

The tramp found the farmer alone and suffering, and from his incoherent talk understood that he had determined to take his own life and had already swallowed poison.

There was an empty glass and a paper which had contained the strychnine, and the tramp was beseeched to "hurry on and tell Mary" that she might see him before he died.

Instead of thus concerning himself the fellow helped himself to some provisions and clothing, and he had on a coat belonging to the dead man when overhauled by the detective.

While I was soon satisfied of her innocence, and brought several others round to my way of thinking, it took six months to get the case re-opened, and even then it was ridiculed by the Press and public.

The solicitor who had taken the woman's case through the court and not even raised a doubt in her favour, called to tell me that all the lawyers in the county could not even get a disagreement of the jury if the case was reopened, but we, nevertheless, went ahead with it.

In two days her character was cleared and she stood a free and innocent woman, but yet only half the public were satisfied, and to this day there are scores of people who believe that she was guilty and ought to have ended her days in prison.

She went to a far-off town, but her name as "The Borgia" followed her there and prevented her from making a living, and a year later came the news of her suicide by jumping overboard from a steamer.

M. Q.

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A DROP OF WATER.

THE foremost of the Arabs stumbled suddenly, and pitched heavily forward upon the sand. His companion, who had been following closely in his footsteps, stopped, hesitated, looked abstractedly across the flat expanse of desert, and then began feverishly to unfasten the leather water bottle from the girdle of the prostrate man. He held it up, shook it slightly and listened. There was not a sound. Cautiously he tipped the bottle more and more, until it was completely inverted; but not a drop of the precious liquid greeted his red, restless eyes.

He put his hand to his breast and drew forth a similar bottle from the folds of his long, flowing robe. Yes! Thanks be to Allah! there were still a few mouthfuls left; and a rasping laugh came from his blistered throat as he shook the bottle and listened to the life-giving gurgle within. Then he raised it to his lips. An instant later and it was snatched violently from his hands, several drops of its precious contents splashing out upon the thirsty sand, where it was immediately swallowed up.

With a cry more nearly like that of a despairing animal than a human sound, he sprang upon his companion, bearing him heavily backward to the ground and in the shock of the fall the bottle slipped from the other's hand and rolled some distance away, where it lay wavering and distorted by the intense heat.

Both saw what had happened; and filled simultaneously with a nameless dread that it might be lost to both of them, lay still for a brief second and watched it.

Then the struggle began again. Over and over the brown figures rolled, the hot sand burning like fire wherever it came in contact with the naked skin, and their breath coming in quick gasps from between their cracked and swollen lips.

The intense physical strain was plainly telling upon their strength, and seemingly urged by a common impulse they paused a moment, each retaining his hold upon the other's body.

The wind shifted the finely powdered sand and drove it persistently into eyes and open mouths. The heat became unendurable; better to die fighting than to die slowly roasted to death by the blistering sun, and that with water almost within their reach.

Again in the blind fury of their struggles the distance was slowly widening between them and the half-emptied bottle, so that when in another minute or so, they paused again, it lay several yards away, and was already beginning to parch and crack in the frightful heat that poured down upon it. A harsh rattling sound broke the fascinating stillness.

The legs of one of the Arabs jerked convulsively once or twice, the muscles of his neck twitched slightly, any slowly rolling over upon his back, he shuddered and la still.

The other man struggled painfully to his knees. He looked wonderingly at the dead form beside him for an instant, and then burst into a hoarse peal of laughter that jarred appallingly upon the solitude of the place and hushed him instantly.

In the mad terror of delirium that now settled down upon him he began slowly making his way across the waste of sand that separated him from water and a few more hours of life.

It was a last supreme effort to shake off the already tightening grasp upon his throat. His eyes were red and bloodshot, and from between the tightly drawn lips his dust-laden tongue lolled horribly.

Once he looked back, but what he saw there only urged him to fiercer effort, and with almost superhuman endurance he dragged himself inch by inch towards the goal.

A few seconds, that seemed an eternity to him, and the fearful struggle was at an end. In a frenzy of delight he seized and raised the bottle to his smarting lips, only to fling it away again, for even in that short time the fierce heat had done its work; and through the half-opened seams, drop by drop, the water had leaked out and vanished deep into the hot sands.

The grasp on his throat tightened; he tried to cry out, but his swollen tongue seemed to be choking him, and no sound came from between his lips.

The delirium gained headway fast, and he began to dig furiously in the loose sand where the bottle had lain as if he would follow and overtake the priceless fluid before it was lost to him for ever.

Gradually the flesh was wore away from the finger tips, leaving the bone exposed; but he seemed to take no notice, and only dug the more desperately, on and on, until at last the overtaxed brain gave way, and, like a mortally wounded animal, he collapsed suddenly, and pitched limply forward upon the sand. A puff of hot, suffocating air blew some sand over him. More and more sifted into his nostrils and trickled down into his blackened throat.

A beautifully mottled lizard paused an instant, eyed distrustfully the strange object in its path, and then darted swiftly away, scattering the sand at every step. And over all, a vast presence from the world beyond, hung the appalling stillness of the great desert.

W. R. T.

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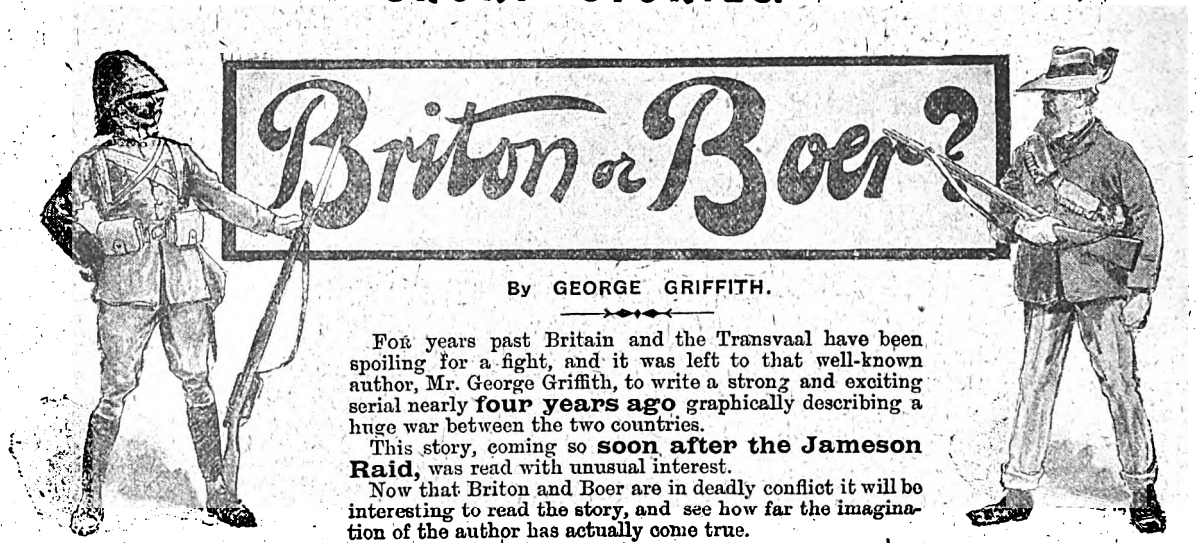

By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

For years past Britain and the Transvaal have been spoiling for a fight, and it was left to that well-known author, Mr. George Griffith, to write a strong and exciting serial nearly **four years ago** graphically describing a huge war between the two countries.

This story, coming so **soon after the Jameson Raid,** was read with unusual interest.

Now that Briton and Boer are in deadly conflict it will be interesting to read the story, and see how far the imagination of the author has actually come true.

SUMMARY OF OPENING CHAPTERS.

Chapter I.—The scene op us on the Rand. It is the eve of Amajuba day and a State ball is being given. To this comes Prince Paul Regna, a Polish nobleman, and his daughter, Princess Vavara. They are introduced to Dr. Leyds.

Chapter II.—Dr. Leyds returns to Pretoria to attend a midnight consultation at the Government buildings. The Prince's rooms are in the Grand Hotel opposite. By tapping the wires, which cross the street at this point, the Prince and his daughter overhear all that goes on, and telegraph the result by secret code to Europe.

Chapters III. and IV.—Amajuba day dawns. The Secretary accompanies the Prince and Princess to Krugersdorp, where, from the base of the Monument of Independence, the President makes a great proclamation. The Convention of London is abrogated, the absolute independence of the South African Republic is declared; the President unfurls a Union Jack and rends it to pieces. So the storm bursts!

CHAPTER V.

Bad News at Buluwayo.

"We can't get through to Palapye or Tuli, General, and a wire has just arrived from Sir Richard Martin at Salisbury to say that no replies have been received from Chimoyio for forty-eight hours."

Major-General Sir Frederick Carrington, Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial, Colonial, and irregular troops in Rhodesia, received the piece of intelligence, at once startling and puzzling, from the lips of Captain Scott-Turner, his adjutant, while holding a sort of informal council of war in his headquarters in Buluwayo on the evening of the eventful sixteenth of December, 1896.

Lord Grey, administrator of the Chartered Company; Major Watts, chief staff officer; and Colonel Plumer, commanding the irregular troops which had been enlisted at Mafeking in the early part of the year, looked up simultaneously from the maps and papers which lay on the table before them with undisguised astonishment and some little concern depicted on their faces.

"What the deuce can that mean?" said Sir Frederick, after a brief pause, tapping the table gently with his finger-nails. Palapye, Tuli, Chimoyio! Why, that means that Rhodesia is no longer in telegraphic communication with the rest of the world.

"Captain Turner, see at once how far the lines are clear in both directions. Tell Captain Murray to have his troop ready to start in an hour's time for Mangwe. He must make his transport as light as possible and go as quickly as he can; but every man must take 200 rounds with him, and 10,000 more must go in the waggons. If he finds all right at Mangwe, as I suppose he will, he must leave his waggon and the extra ammunition with Mr. Selous, and then push on to Tati, and, if he can, to Palapye; but the moment he meets a check or finds the break in the wire he must get back to Mangwe as fast as possible and report. Tell Captain Drury to be ready to start at the same time for Puri, and let him take the same ammunition and follow the same instructions as you will give to Captain Murray, but let me know at once how far the wires can be trusted."

The adjutant saluted and left the room. As the door closed behind him General Carrington turned to the Administrator and said somewhat abruptly:

"Well, my lord, what do you think of this? Was I right or wrong in telling the Commissioner that there ought to have been thirty thousand troops in South Africa before the end of the year?"

"In other words, General, you take this as proof presumptive that your prophecy was right, and that our friends, the Boers, are out on the war-path?"

"Our friends the Boers be ——— smashed. They've never been friends of ours and never will be till they've had the biggest hiding on record. Yes, I believe that's it. There is no other way of accounting for it, and to my mind for a good many other things that have happened. We ought to have smashed these niggers months ago. They oughtn't to have had a cartridge left by the end of last August, and yet here they are in every brush we have with them, blazing away as if they had all Woolwich behind them and shooting faster and straighter every week.

"Where did they get their Lee-Metfords from, and who taught them to use them? Why do they scarcely ever come out into the open now and give the Maxim a chance as they used to do? Why are the friendlies disappearing in hundreds every week? Why are a hundred other things that you know of happening if they haven't got someone behind them, and who can that someone be if it isn't the Boers? God grant that there may be another explanation, but I'll be hanged if I can see one."

"I hope you are wrong, General," replied Lord Grey very seriously, "but I confess I can see no other explanation at present. At any rate there is obviously only one thing to

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be done till we get definite news, and that is to act as though your suspicions were correct."

"Exactly," said Sir Frederick. "That is just what I mean to do. We must hold Mangwe and Puri at all costs, and get in touch with Salisbury as soon as possible. I hope they have got plenty of ammunition up there, for we shall want every cartridge and every gun-charge we can lay our hands on."

"To my mind," said Major Watts when the General had finished speaking, "the news from Salisbury is even more serious than the other. After all, the Kaffirs may have cut the wires on the Tuli and Palapye lines, though I admit it is not likely, but they could hardly have cut the Chimoyio line unless the rebellion has crossed the border at last. That looks rather more like an international matter to me. I hope those Portuguese beggars haven't gone back on us, and sold Beira to the Dutchmen."

"I can hardly see how they could do that," said Colonel Plumer, "unless something very big has been happening very quickly."

"To my mind there has been something very big getting ready to happen ever since Robinson allowed old Kruger and young Leyds to spoof the Home Government as they did over the Jameson business. Indeed, I don't see how we could have expected anything else. Here we have been standing by watching the Transvaal and the Free State arming every man and boy to the teeth, bringing in guns by the dozen and ammunition by the ton from Germany, importing German officers to drill their artillerymen and what they call their police, building forts and sprinkling laagers all round the frontiers for the last twelve months, and meanwhile we have been apologising to them for bringing a few hundred British troops into British territory to smash these niggers, and now here we are with about five or six thousand men in the country to tackle forty or fifty thousand of them. If the Government had made up its mind to lose South Africa it couldn't have set about the job in better fashion. Come in! Well, Turner, what's the news?"

"Selous reports all well at Mangwe and line open as far as Tati. Captain Bowden has sent out scouts from Tati to the Junction Post to find the break, and if possible get on to Palapye, but has heard nothing so far. Captain Satchwell wires from Puri that he can get nothing from Tuli. He has scouts out too but none have reported. There is no news from Maclutski of course, as Palapye is cut off. Sir Richard Martin wires from Salisbury that the line is open to Umtali. The Portuguese will make no reply from Macequece, or Chimoyio. Everything is quiet at Iron Mine, Charter, and Victoria. No rebels have been seen for some days, and scouts report generally that they have retired to the hill country behind the Matoppos. The two troops will be ready to start in half-an-hour."

Captain Scott-Turner made his report with soldierly brevity and directness, and it was received by the General and the members of his staff in serious, almost ominous, silence.

It left no doubt but that, however it had come to pass, all the main lines of communication between Rhodesia and the south and east of Africa were cut, and that for the time being those responsible for the defence and government of the country must act entirely at their own discretion and on their own responsibility.

It will here save time and future interruptions of the narrative if we leave the General and his staff to make their arrangements for dealing with the inexplicable emergency with which they were so suddenly faced, and take a brief survey of the course of the second Matabili war during the latter half of 1896.

Up to the middle of June all appearances pointed to the speedy break-up of the native power under the ably-planned tactics and vigorous attacks of Sir Frederick Carrington and the officers and men under his command. Then a sudden change had come over the campaign. The Matabili impis forsook their old mode of fighting, and, clearing entirely out of the open bush country in which they had been defeated time after time, vanished—some into the wilderness of the north-west towards Zambesi, and some into the difficult mountain country between the Matoppos and the Selous Pioneer Road, and then they began to play what was obviously a waiting game.

Almost simultaneously the Mashona tribes rose under Makone and Chibi, the two most powerful chiefs in the country, and the war became one of ambuscades and night attacks of difficult and costly marches through mountain valleys and gorges lined by concealed marksmen, who, as Sir Frederick had hinted, shot wonderfully straight for natives, and who vanished with disgusting celerity before the harrased and exasperated troopers could get within striking distance of them.

Again and again it had been suspected that this strange change of tactics was not originated by the natives themselves, and yet no white man had never been seen among them. Only the fact remained that as the encounters became rarer and more difficult to bring about their shooting continued to improve, and their supply of ammunition seemed inexhaustible. Many of the troopers, too, had fallen under bullets fired from Lee-Metford rifles, most of them of the "split" type, which broke up on touching a bone and inflicted the most fearful wounds.

Thus the war had dragged on month after month in spite of everything that skill and valour could do to bring matters to a decisive issue until now the cutting of the wires and the isolation of Rhodesia seemed to indicate that at length the mysterious power which had been fighting behind or through the rebels for so long was about to declare itself by some decisive action.

At this time there were about two thousand seven hundred white troops in Rhodesia, and of these about a thousand were distributed on the road between Buluwayo and Salisbury; some twelve hundred were stationed in and about Buluwayo itself. Mr. Selous held the Mangwe Pass, which is a mountain defile some twenty-five miles long about sixty miles south-west of Buluwayo, with three hundred men, four Maxims, and two seven-pounders. Captain Bowden occupied the Puri camp with two hundred men and two Maxims, while Fort Tuli and Palapye, having been considered perfectly safe, had only been occupied by a few troopers and transport officers charged with the duty of forwarding supplies, and, if necessary, acting as escorts to the mail coaches.

From this it will be seen that, granted the correctness of General Carrington's suspicion, the position of the British and Colonial forces in Rhodesia was an extremely serious one. With not quite three thousand men who could be re-

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lied on, for, as the General had said, the Friendlies had been deserting in hundreds, and were, therefore, no longer to be trusted, they were confronted by large but unknown numbers of the rebels hidden away in the defiles of the Matoppo hills and the forests of the back country, and flanked to the southward by the still unknown force which had suddenly cut their communication with their main base of supplies at Mafeking; while to the north, again, Salisbury was cut off from the railway and the sea apparently as completely as Buluwayo was from the south.

The position, too, was as embarrassing as it was serious. To march southward with any force adequate to reopen communication with Palapye and Mafeking would be to leave Buluwayo and the road to the north open to the attack of the Matabele impis, who would concentrate as quickly as they could scatter, and who would be certain to make a desperate, and possibly successful, attack upon the town the moment they knew that the bulk of its defenders had been withdrawn.

On the other hand, if the cutting of the communications was really due to the Boers, and they had actually declared war, or, what was the same thing with them, gone on the warpath without further formalities, they would already be massing in force along the two southern routes, and possibly by this time they were advancing on Buluwayo, in which case the little army of occupation must speedily find itself between two fires, with the savage impis in front of it, and the well-mounted, well-armed commandos of the Boers in their rear.

"There is nothing else for it, gentlemen," said General Carrington at the close of a council of war at which these and many other points had been earnestly reviewed and debated. "We must carry out the work that we came here to do first, and that as speedily as possible.

"In other words, we must clear those niggers out of the Matoppos and drive them down on the Nuanetzi and smash them there at any cost, and as quickly as possible. Selous will have nearly four hundred men at Mangwe when Murray gets there, and I think he can be trusted to keep the Boers busy there so long as the ammunition holds out. He'll be playing with them at their own game of potting from behind stones, and a little of that will go a long way with them.

"I shall send two hundred more men down to Puri and ask you to take command of the position, Colonel Plumer, with Captain Bowden as your second. I shall ask Sir Richard Martin to move down on Victoria with every man and all the ammunition that can be spared from Salisbury, as I don't think any attack is possible there, unless, of course, we are at war with Portugal, and in that case we must leave the Pungwe to the Imperial Government. Your lordship will, I presume, remain in Buluwayo.

"Major Watts, I shall leave you with two hundred men to look after the town. Captain Wheeler will stay with you in charge of the artillery, and, of course, all the men in the place will hold themselves ready for service if necessary. I needn't tell you what to do in case of an attack, which is most unlikely. I shall start myself an hour before sunrise, with the rest of the troops for the hills.

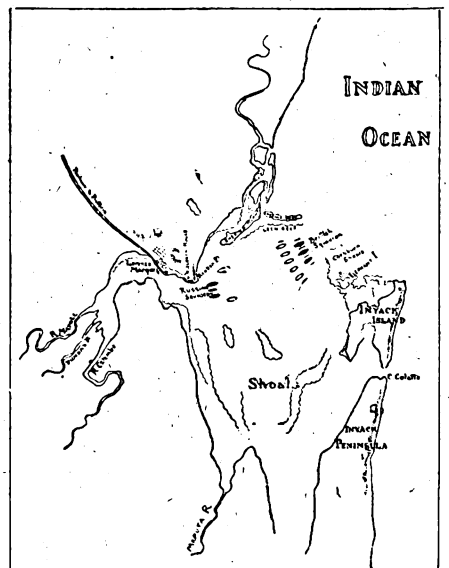
"We shall probably be pretty busy until Sir Richard Martin reaches Victoria; but by the time he gets there I hope we shall be driving the niggers down on the Nuanetzi, or perhaps the Bubye, though I shall try and head them off from the south if possible. In that case he'll have to push on down the road to Lundi and bring his column up the river bank, so that we can catch them between us. If we can manage this, that part of the problem will be solved, and by that time we shall know what the Boers are doing. If they really are on the warpath, I shall trust to you, Colonel Plumer, and Selous and Murray not to let them pass Puri or Mangwe till Sir Richard and myself come up, and then we'll see what we can do with them. The men will parade at half-past four in full marching order. Now, gentlemen, good-night, and if any of you can manage to dream anything in the shape of a way out of this fix that we seem to be in, I shall be glad to hear of it in the morning."

CHAPTER VI.

The Keyhole of Africa.

While the events which have just been narrated were taking place in the Transvaal and Rhodesia, certain others had been happening far away, as regards distance, yet for all that very closely connected with them, which had a very considerable effect in tangling still further the already involved web of international diplomacy.

A foreknowledge of them, had that been possible, would



Map of Delagoa Bay, illustrating chapters VI., VII., and VIII.

have very considerably modified the policy, not only of Prince Paul Regna and his beautiful daughter, but also of Mr. Secretary Leyds and the Transvaal Executive.

In order to arrive at a proper understanding of them, it will be necessary to put the clock back about a month, and to shift the scene from the Transvaal and Rhodesia, first to British waters and then to Delagoa Bay, "the keyhole of Africa," as it has been by no means inaptly termed.

At the close of the British Naval Manœuvres certain warships had disappeared, their disappearance having been accounted for by the official statement that they had been dispatched to relieve other ships of a similar class at distant stations, which they could not possibly reach at the ordinary ten-steaming rate of ten knots under five or six weeks.

As a matter of fact they didn't do anything of the kind. On the contrary, they coaled up to their fullest capacity, took in their full complement of powder, shell, and small-arm ammunition at Queenstown, Milford Haven, Plymouth, Portland, and Portsmouth, and steamed away to sea with a singular unanimity of direction for vessels which the newspapers of the day after their sailing described as having departed for widely different parts of the globe.

Twenty-four days later the officials of Lorenco Marquez were startled out of their habitual somnolence by the apparition of the most powerful flying squadron that had ever floated on the waters of their lovely bay. It happened,

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He looked at it and read its meaning.

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singularly enough, that two Russian battleships, the *Navarin* and the *Gangout*, with the cruisers *Rurick* and *Russia*, and the torpedo-destroyer *Sokol* were also lying there—a fact which was not unconnected with the dispatch of a certain telegram from Pretoria and the sudden sailing of a steam yacht after Mr. Michael Ostroff had replied to it to the effect that Prince Regna's luggage was coming up immediately.

The first intimation of the arrival of the British squadron was given by the destroyer *Thrasher*, which came tearing into the bay, at something between twenty-five and twenty-six knots, about daybreak on the 17th of December.

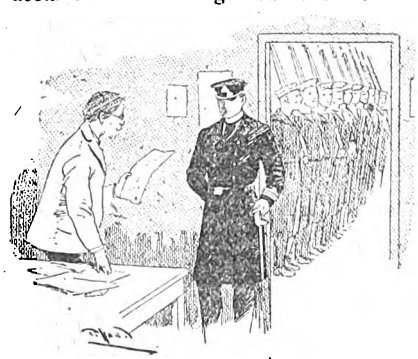
She slowed up as she entered the harbour, saluted the Russians by dipping her ensign as she passed, then ran in alongside the jetty, nearly opposite the old castle, and landed a lieutenant and twenty bluejackets, who marched rapidly up the quay to the foot of the Rua Guato y Castero, which leads to the Plaza, very much to the astonishment of a few drowsy loafers, mostly negroes, who were about at that early hour.

The Lieutenant presented a portentous-looking document, bearing the royal arms of Portugal, to the sentry on duty at the custom house, and demanded to see the officer of the guard at once. The sight of a handful of silver instantly dissipated the drowsiness and official surliness of the sentry. For the nonce he became as alert as he was polite, pocketed the silver with a salute, and proceeded to awake the officer of the guard from his morning slumber with a recklessness that only the possession of about a year's pay in hard cash could properly have warranted.

The officer looked in stupefied amazement at the document, read it three times over regardless of the manifest impatience of the Lieutenant, and then handed it back with a bow, saying:

"I cannot understand it, Senor; but no less can I disobey the orders of His Sacred Majesty. You and your men are free to pass. I will acquaint the Governor as soon as His Excellency rises."

The Lieutenant of the *Thrasher* returned the officer of the guard's punctilious salute correctly but somewhat hurriedly, and marched his men straight up by Point Reuben Road to the telegraph house and wired via Durban to Capetown the single word "Here." He then informed the clerk in charge that every message received or dispatched over the cables or the land lines must be immediately submitted to him under authority of the British and Portuguese Governments; and in substantiation of this somewhat extraordinary demand, he first presented the document which had gained him admission to the town, and then hinted pretty plainly that if this were not accepted as sufficient, the question would have to be decided by *force majeure*.



The clerk looked at the document and then at the Lieutenant, and then at the twenty bluejackets, armed to the teeth and looking extremely businesslike, and, being a man of business, he simply said:

"Very well, sir. It is a most extraordinary—I may say, in fact, unheard of—proceeding; but as you appear to have both right and might on your side, of course, I can do nothing but place myself and the wires at your disposal. At the same time, under the circumstances, I suppose you will have no objection to my calling the Director of the station to make the arrangements with you? To tell you the truth, I scarcely care to undertake the responsibility myself."

"I've not the slightest objection to that," said the Lieutenant, "but I'd rather you didn't leave the instrument for the present, at any rate, until I get my reply from Capetown. How long do you think that will be?"

"If the lines are clear you may get an answer in half an hour," replied the clerk, looking up rather uneasily.

"As long as that? Of course you'll find the line clear, or at least I fancy so. However, if it will be as long as that perhaps you had better go and call the Director."

Nothing loth, the clerk left his seat and the room, and in a very few minutes the Director came back with him. The necessary explanations were soon over, as the conditions of the case left but little room for argument, especially after the Lieutenant had given his pledge that the British Government would be responsible for the hire of the line to Cape Town during the time that it was at his disposal.

These little preliminaries being concluded, Lieutenant Mark Ferris, of Her Majesty's torpedo-destroyer *Thrasher*, offered the Director a cigarette from a very neat little curved silver case, which he took from an appropriate resting-place in the watch-pocket of his waistcoat—it had two neatly entwined monograms engraved on the side that reposed next to his heart—took one for himself, lit it, and asking the Director to excuse him for a moment, pencilled the two letters "O.K." on a piece of paper, called two of his men and sent them down to the quay with it, then he said to the Director:

"I suppose there is a pretty good view of the bay from your platform up yonder on the roof?"

"Oh, yes," was the reply. "Anything interesting likely to be going on?"

"Well, very possibly," said the Lieutenant, answering the Director's smile with another.

"Ah! then in that case, perhaps, you wouldn't object to join me in an early cup of coffee up there, or would you prefer whisky and soda?"

"Coffee with pleasure," said the Lieutenant. "It's a bit early for whisky and soda, even in Delagoa Bay. If you'll allow me, I'll have a couple of my men in here, so that one of them can bring me the answer up. It's important, you know, that I should have it immediately it arrives."

"Oh, ah! yes, of course if you wish it," replied the Director, looking rather curiously at him.

"Thanks. Can't afford any mistakes, just now, you see. It will be particularly awkward, not to say a trifle serious, as I expect you'll be able to see for yourself before long. Now I'll just call my two fellows in, and then I'm at your service. We may miss something if we wait much longer."

As soon as the two bluejackets had received their orders the Director and the Lieutenant went up to the look-out platform, which commanded a magnificent view of the inner harbour between Rueben Point and Mawhone Point.

Some fifteen minutes passed in sipping coffee, puffing cigarettes, and rather desultory conversation, the Director meanwhile thinking, and quite rightly, that his guest was curiously reticent and preoccupied.

At length the latter looked at his watch for about the fifth time, got up from his chair, pulled a small but very powerful binocular telescope out of his pocket and proceeded to scan the ships in the bay intently through it, meanwhile humming gently to himself between the puffs of his cigar-

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ette disjointed fragments of a tune which the Director recognised as an imperfectly rendered version of "After the Ball." Suddenly he blew the stump from his lips with a short, sharp whistle which was echoed as it were, by the distant bang of a gun from the bay.

"Blank!" he said as the hills about the harbour rolled out their answer to the report. "A good job it wasn't shotted at that range. Ah! that one meant business," he went on as another bang, deeper toned than the first, broke the stillness of the early tropic morning.

Then the Director heard something very like a sigh of relief, and after that came the muttered words:

"That's an act of war; no mistake about that. No court martial now, thank God! Lucky it didn't hit her. Now then, *Thrasher*, my little beauty, every knot you've got. Put her into it, Stevens! Hurrah! missed again! Ah! there comes the fleet! Now, gentlemen, you'll have to shoot a bit straighter than that, or we shall have to teach you."

The Director had sprung from his seat at the sound of the first shot about as quickly as if he had expected the shell to burst under his chair. He came to the Lieutenant's side and said rather nervously:

"May I ask what the meaning of all this is, sir? Is it possible that war has been declared between ourselves and Russia?"

"Yes, sir, that shot means war," said the Lieutenant somewhat shortly, and turned his glasses seaward again.

The scene before him could hardly have been more interesting, not to say exciting, even to a sailor and an officer situated as Lieutenant Ferris was. As the *Thrasher* had started from the jetty at about half speed, a signal flew from the *Navarin* ordering her to stop and come alongside. This had been answered by the destroyer with a sudden leap forward, and the flinging up of two clouds of spray from her bow in obedience to the signal, "Full speed ahead," and under the whole impetus of her six thousand horse-power engines, the long black craft had rushed away through the smooth water of the bay at a speed that was not very far short of thirty-five statute miles an hour.

Then had come the blank charge from the *Navarin's* six-inch breechloaders, quickly followed by a shell—so quickly indeed, that the Lieutenant saw that the second gun must have been ready loaded.

This meant a good deal. It meant, in a word, that the Russians strongly suspected the designs of the *Thrasher*, and were ready to stop her getting away, even at the risk of committing an act of war.

The shell burst only a few yards wide of the flying little craft, then out of a dun-smoke cloud that had been lying along the eastern horizon across the wide mouth of the harbour since the light had been strong enough to show it, there came the flash of a pale stream of flame, and a few seconds later a shell burst high up in the air over the bay.

"A well-timed shell, that," said the Lieutenant. "They ought to see from that we have not sent the little *Thrasher* alone to fight the squadron. That was one of the *Terrible's* nine-inch, I suppose. Ah, here she comes! Now, I suppose there will be a bit of a row. Missed her again! That's shockingly bad shooting, gentlemen. There, she's round the Point! Well done, Stevens! Has that answer come yet?"

"Yes, sir," said one of the bluejackets who had just come up the platform. He saluted and handed the Lieutenant a seemingly meaningless jumble of words. He looked at it, and read its meaning thus:

"Hold cable, and capture or destroy enemy at all cost. Admiral proceed Cape Town, leaving *Revenge*, *Edgar*, *Thrasher*, Delagoa."

"That will do, Roberts. Go down and wait for anything else that comes," said the Lieutenant as he folded the paper up and put it in his pocket. Then he turned to the Director and said: "Now, sir, you must understand that war is virtually declared between Great Britain and Russia. A British squadron is coming to capture or sink all the warships in the bay, and to take possession of the harbour for the time being. You, however, needn't trouble about that, as it has been arranged between the two governments. Now will you be good enough to hoist the red ensign on the flagstaff at once. When you've done so I'll explain matters as far as I can."

The Director nodded and left the platform.

While this was taking place at the telegraph station the Russian warships had slipped their cables and were heading out to sea. The Portuguese battleship *Vasco da Gama*, which was lying near them, contented herself with hoisting her flag and remaining quietly at anchor as though the matter did not concern her very much. Lieutenant Ferris stood with his eyes glued to his glasses, inwardly fuming, and feeling anything but contented with the really important duty that he had so successfully performed, and watched the preliminaries of the fight that was coming with such patience as he could muster, which was not very much.

(To be continued).

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT THE WAR.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "The Member's Wife," by the Hon. Mrs. Henry Chetwynd, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source must be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. E. Makepeace, 24 Hood Street, Morpeth. Attempts for this week's prize should deal with WAR ANECDOTES and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, March 5th. Post-cards only, please.

"Which Eye?"

DURING the bombardment of Alexandria, in 1882, Lord Charles Beresford asked a gunner if he could hit a man who was on the fort. The gunner replied:

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Then hit him in the eye," said Lord Charles.

And he was considerably astonished when the gunner replied:

"Which eye, sir?" E. M.

Fully Qualified.

A YOUNG fellow the other day presented himself at a certain recruiting station and volunteered for service in South Africa.

"Can you ride?" asked the sergeant in charge.

"Yes," replied the would-be volunteer.

"Can you shoot—that is, shoot from the saddle?"

"Yes."

The sergeant, however, was not satisfied with the fellow's bare word concerning these qualifications, and accordingly led the way to a courtyard at the back.

"Now then," said the sergeant, as a horse kept for the purpose of testing the riding capabilities of applicants was brought forth, "let me see what you can do."

The young fellow clambered into the saddle, and the horse after walking a few paces broke into a canter, then into a gallop, and at a crack from the sergeant's whip suddenly stopped dead, shooting the rider clean out of the saddle on to the ground.

"No good coming here with a pack of lies," said the sergeant good-humouredly.

"Pack of lies," exclaimed the fallen and crest-fallen applicant from his seat on the ground, "I never told you a word of a lie. If I hadn't been a good rider I should have been seriously hurt, and as for shooting, did you ever see a fellow shoot from the saddle as I did just now? You can't help admitting, sergeant, that I'm fully qualified." C. R. F.

Commandeered It.

ONE morning a few weeks ago a soldier entered the camp at Modder River leading a scraggy-looking goat by a piece of string.

His entrance was the signal for a burst of laughter from his comrades.

"What ho, Dick!" cried one of them. "Wot 'ave you got there? 'Ave you stolen it?"

"Stolen it be blowed!" said Dick. "I've commandeered it, an' left my blooming receipt chalked on a tree." A. H.

"A Terrible Accident."

A MANCHESTER soldier now at the front in describing how they make "duff" whilst on board and dispose of it, says:

"We had a terrible accident the other day with our duff.

"After making it, we took it to the cook-house where they boiled it. When it was served at dinner-time, it was all dough in the middle, so we took it back and roasted it for tea.

"When we got it, we broke three picks, four spades, ten knives, and seven forks, trying to cut or break it. At last we threw it overboard, and as we threw it the boat ran into it.

"It shook the ship from stern to stern; the captain stopped the engines, thinking we had struck a rock. After sounding the well they found the ship wasn't leaking, and when we told the captain what it was, he was going to put us in the guard-room for wasting Government rations." G. N.

It Certainly Would be Awkward.

A RAILWAY man responsible for the transit of a giraffe from Liverpool to London managed to get the animal on a truck, but it would not lie down, neither would it be seated. He coaxed it, pleaded with it, and tried to make it lie down; but in vain.

It gave the man a stony stare, and continued its melancholy clatter on the truck floor.

"Why are tha struggling with, Jim?" asked the goods guard, with a winsome smile, as he walked by.

"Well," replied the panting servant, "I'll reckon tha'll have some strugglin' wi' him when t' train gets t' first bridge. If tha' doesn't tie his neck in a knot, he'll have his head knocked off!" W. T.

She Knew.

"DID the postman leave any letters, Mary?" the mistress asked, on returning from a visit one afternoon.

"Nothing but a post-card, ma'am."

"Who is it from, Mary?"

"And do you think I'd read it, ma'am?" asked the girl, with an injured air.

"Perhaps not. But anyone who sends me a message on a post card is either stupid or impertinent."

"You'll excuse me, ma'am," returned the girl, loftily, "but that's a nice way to be talking about your own mother!" S. E.

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Where He Served.

A certain colonel (now dead) was noted for his generosity. He had lost an arm during the Indian Mutiny, and this made him very sympathetic towards all who had met with similar losses.

While walking on his estate one day he met an old one-legged man, evidently in abject poverty.

"Ah! you have met with a great misfortune, like myself, I see," remarked the colonel.

"Ah!" replied the old man, "and like yersel', colonel, I have spent a great pairt o' my life in Her Majesty's service, and seen a hantle o' hard work."

"My poor man!" exclaimed the kind-hearted colonel, as he pushed a half-crown into the old man's hand, "I fear you have received but a poor reward for your services."

"Ye may weel say that, colonel," replied the veteran as he hobbled away.

"But," added the colonel, "you didn't tell me where you served."

"Weel, if it comes to that," the old reprobate answered with a sly chuckle, "I served my time i' the Perth Penitentiary, whaur they gie'd me fourteen years for stealin' a cadger's horse!" J. H.

No Doubt About It.

A certain well-known general, in recently reviewing a crack Hussar Regiment, under orders for South Africa, suddenly stopped before a splendid-looking fellow, and asked abruptly:

"Which is the best horse in the regiment, my man?"

"No. 40, sir."

"What makes you think he is the best horse?"

"He walks, trots, and gallops well, is a good leaper, has no vice, no blemish, carries his head well, is in his prime."

"And who is the best soldier in the regiment?"

"Jim Nolan, sir."

"Why?"

"Because he is an honourable man, is obedient, tidy, takes good care of his equipment and his horse, and does his duty well."

"And who is the rider of the best horse?"

"Jim Nolan, sir."

"And who is Jim Nolan?"

"I am, sir!"

The general could not help laughing as he wished him good luck when at the front. F. W. F.

Working Under Difficulties.

There is an amusing story of a labourer who, failing to get a job of any other sort, at length took service as a diver at some new harbour works. Well, they got him into the kit, explained all about the communicating-cord to him, screwed his big helmet on, and let him go overboard. For six or seven minutes he was lost in the lower blue; then he signalled to be hauled up.

"Take this thing off my head," he shouted, and they removed his helmet.

"Boys," he continued, "this business is no sort o' good to me at all."

"Why not?" they asked.

"Because," said he, "I'll niver work where I can't shpit on me hands!" E. S.

Just a Difference in the Time.

The composer, Sir Henry Smart, played an organ in a London church, and his recital after church excited much attention; but one morning, after a selection from one of Mozart's masses, a churchwarden came into the organ loft, and "begged to inform Mr. Smart that they had decided that they could not have such jiggy stuff played in their church."

"Very well, sir," was the answer, "it shall be altered."

On the next Sunday dirge-like sounds proceeded from the organ, and the churchwarden congratulated the player on the solemn and elevating effect of the music.

"I am glad you like it," answered Mr. Smart; "doubtless if I played it a little quicker you will see the reason it affected you," and, suiting the action to the word, the popular strains of "Jump Jim Crow," resounded from the organ.

After this Henry Smart played what he liked.

N. W.

A Girl With Ready Wit.

A young woman who lives near a railway crossing, looking out of the window the other day, saw a labourer jump from one set of metals to the other to escape an approaching train. He was apparently dazed by terror, and stood still, not seeing that an express train was rushing down upon him.

The girl saw that before she could make him understand his danger it would be too late. She therefore threw up her arms, shrieking wildly: "Help! help!" trusting to the impulse which sends a man on the instant to the relief of a woman in distress.

"I'm coming!" shouted the labourer, springing towards her in time to escape the engine as it rushed past.

He stared back at it, and then at the woman crying and laughing in the window, and, taking off his hat with shaking hands, said:

"I owe you something, miss," and walked away.

A. T.

Some People Never Satisfied.

Some years ago a wealthy manufacturer in Canada, employing nearly a thousand hands, established a "model" city, thus giving the workmen and their families many comforts and luxuries that they could not have attained unaided. Of course, there were regulations to govern the model city, which, as a rule, were cheerfully observed.

There were fault-finders, however, and especially a new-comer, named Bascomb. Among the rules was one forbidding the burning of soft coal, on account of the odour and smoke, and Bascomb objected strongly.

"My goodness!" remonstrated a friend, "I don't see what you are growling about. We get hard coal at cost price, and, as one ton goes as far as two of the other, you ain't out of pocket."

"'Tain't right to forbid it," asserted Bascomb.

"Look here," demanded his friend, "do you really want to burn the nasty stuff?"

"No, I don't wanter," replied Bascomb, "but I wanter have the right in case I wanter!" B. S.

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The Island of Zalenda.

SOMETHING had gone wrong with our engines, and, being in the Pacific Ocean, we put in for repairs to an island that happened just handy; latitude 20deg. south, longitude 120deg., or thereabouts.

No, it's no good your looking it up; you won't find it marked on any map or chart. The island was of volcanic origin, I believe (certainly, its inhabitants were!) and it has disappeared as mysteriously as it came into being. It was peopled by a race of beings who dressed and behaved, in most respects, like Europeans. All the luxuries and refinements of civilization were cultivated there to the highest pitch; all the arts and sciences as thoroughly understood as in the most enlightened countries of the West. When we first sighted the land, with its vast harbour full of shipping, and its noble public buildings, Captain Murdoch was amazed, never having heard of the place; but he was an old seaman, not much given to marvelling at things, and looked upon the matter as a rare piece of good luck in being able, so unexpectedly, to have his machinery skilfully mended.

Having nothing to do during our enforced stay on the island, we all bent our attention to exploring the town and neighbourhood, and having a good time generally. The inhabitants were very friendly, and treated us with the utmost hospitality.

Frank Lennox, the second officer, and I made the acquaintance of an influential merchant and member of Parliament, named Xilio, who invited us to take up our quarters at his house during our sojourn at Zalenda. He had two beautiful daughters, Melia and Seraphis. Their personal attractions were much enhanced by the artistic yet simple costume worn by the ladies of the place. It consists of a flowing, classic robe, girt round the waist with a gold chain, looped up on, one shoulder with a diamond pin, draped off the other and leaving arms, throat, and feet bare.

When I inform you that these girls' intellectual attainments were equal to their physical charms, will it surprise you to hear that two susceptible and impressionable young men fell in love—Lennox with Seraphis and myself with her sister Melia. The latter was fancy free; but poor Lennox was treading upon far more dangerous ground with Seraphis.

It is far easier to watch the course of others' love affairs than one's own. There was a young man named Kolophen, who was a constant visitor at Xilio's house. When he came one day, and found Frank and Seraphis on the veranda, sitting very close together, her fair, hair brushing his cheek, his arm, I believe—but of this I am not quite sure—around her slender waist, I detected an unmistakeable gleam of hatred in the dark passionate face of the young Zalendanese; but, like most of his countrymen, he was polite and reserved, and said nothing.

Xilio just then entered, and the pair of turtle doves on the veranda naturally drew apart. Conversation turned upon the subject of political and social institutions, and many were the questions asked me respecting European ways and customs.

"Your form of government here is republican?" I asked in return.

"Of course!" our host answered, as though no other form of rule were admissible to a logical mind. "Our parliament is constantly trying experiments; giving a year or two's trial to some eccentric law, in order to see how it will work for the people's good, I myself do not always approve. This leads me to speak of the one dark tragedy in our code."

"Ah, I know what you mean," Seraphis said plaintively; "please do not tell them, father, it might drive the Englishmen away."

Kolophen's looks said "I wish to heaven it would!" as plain as looks could speak.

"That cannot be," said Melia, in her sweet, flute-like voice. "Darcy and Lennox are of those who go down to the sea in ships, and such are always brave men."

But Seraphis had her own way, which I noticed always happened to this young lady. Ah! had she not done so a terrible calamity might have been averted. But there who can foresee the future or alter the decrees of destiny?

It happened on the following day that Lennox and I were strolling along the main street of the town when we met Kolophen. My friend saluted him politely, but the native was in no mood for amiable intercourse.

"Englishman," he began abruptly, "you have offered your base love to Seraphis, the younger daughter of Xilio, knowing full well that I—I, Kolophen, the son of Aramsis, have been betrothed to her ever since the days of our childhood."

"I—I did not know," Frank began, taken by surprise; "I am a stranger here, remember, Mr. Kolophen, and am very sorry if I have unwittingly caused any trouble."

"Sorry! Take your sorrows with you to the uttermost ends of the world!"

What followed was so rapid that there was no time for me to interfere—no time for anything but to realise the horror of it. Kolophen had whipped out a little jewelled dagger, stabbed the young sailor to the heart, and Frank Lennox lay on the pavement by my side a bleeding corpse.

The assassin folded his arms across his breast and never moved. Aye, and what was more extraordinary than all, a policeman, or *peelah* as they are called in Zalenda, stood on the opposite side of the street calmly looking on.

"You saw that?" I exclaimed, rushing across to the

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officer, as soon as I had ascertained that the poor young fellow was indeed dead.

"I saw," he answered imperturbably.

"Then why do you not arrest that man?"

"I cannot. There must have been a quarrel or some strong provocation. No gentleman would otherwise resort to such an extreme measure."

Good heavens! What a dreadful country this was, where a limb of the law called a cold-blooded murder merely an extreme measure!

"But, man alive!" I cried excitedly, "provocation or no provocation, there is a monstrous crime committed."

"It is no crime in this country, my dear sir. Go to Xilio's. I will see that your poor friend's body is directly conveyed there."

I went, and with tones full of rage and excitement poured out my tragic tale into my host's ears. Seraphis uttered a wild cry and threw herself upon a couch in an agony of grief, while Melia tried to console her.

"Poor Lennox!" said Xilio; "he was a fine fellow, too."

"But I am told his assassin can go unpunished according to your code of laws?"

"Yes, that is so. But does not the same hold good in your own England, only in a different form?"

"Good heavens, no!"

"Oh, yes. When murder is committed with you, you doom the supposed culprit to death on evidence which may all be false, the verdict of a jury and the sentence of a judge who may all be mistaken. Then again, you have what you call war—utterly unknown in our higher civilization. There the man who kills goes unpunished; and the soldier slays and is slain for quarrels not his own, which makes his conduct foolish as well as wicked. I have spoken strongly against our Act to legalise homicide, but when I hear of the institutions of other parts of the globe, I really cannot see the difference. Is it not a fact that some speakers with you, who considered themselves philosophers, in discussing the problem of war *versus* arbitration, were monstrous enough to say that war was a salutary means of doing away with some of the superabundant population?"

I stammered that I believed some such sentiments had been uttered, but asked him if the voice of conscience did not speak in the breasts of his blood-thirsty compatriots.

"Does it speak in that of your soldier, or your judge, your jury, or your hangman?" he retorted. "Bah! what you are pleased to call the voice of conscience is only the fear of punishment."

Xilio left me utterly dumfounded by the conclusion of his discourse; my host's *tu quoque* line of argument was so hard to answer according to his lights. I was aroused from my reverie upon these complex problems of life by the sensation of two soft white arms round my neck. It was Melia.

"And you will go back now to England thinking badly of us," she said; "and then you will forget——"

"Forget you, darling? Never!"

"But you must leave here at once. Your life may not be safe."

"What, leave you, my Melia?"

Great Scot! I knew now, if I never did before, I that must be badly smitten indeed. Here was I, a sober young Englishman, clinging to a land of justifiable homicides, all for the sake of this one sweet girl.

"If—if you could take me with you?" she exclaimed.

"What, loved one!" I said, taking both her hands in mine, and drawing her to me; "would you come to England and be my wife?"

"Oh, yes!"

"But your people?"

"There is no one here that matters. My mother is dead. A greengrocer killed her because she accused him of giving false weight in potatoes. My father is always wrapped up in politics. As for Seraphis, it seems she truly loved your poor friend. But it was not right of her to trifle with Kolophen, I have just taken her to her room. She is half distracted. She swears she will slay Kolophen the first time she meets him. They would think nothing of that here, but somehow—I cannot tell why—I could not like her so much after. Then Aramsis, the father of Kolophen, would probably kill my sister and then my father would kill Aramsis. It would be so unpleasant!"

I shuddered. The fiercest of Corsican vendettas seemed nothing compared with this.

"You know, dear girl, that if you go to England you may not kill your fellow creature as is the custom here?"

I thought it as well to mention this, so as to save any little unpleasantness that might arise from the peculiarities of her nation on landing at home.

"I know," said the dear girl, sweetly; "I don't mind. Bid my father farewell," she continued, "but say nothing to him; it will be best so. Go to your ship, warn your brave companions of their danger. I will join you there. Leave the rest to me."

I was more than ever impressed by the soundness of Melia's judgment. If I asked Xilio for his daughter's hand in marriage, the old gentleman might be a little cross, and I had already seen a tragic proof of what the anger of a Zalendanese meant. So I hurried away to find Captain Murdoch and apprise him of what had happened. Fortunately, the arrangements for departure were nearly complete, and I found the worthy skipper wrangling with a local official over excessive harbour dues.

"Pay you a hundred pieces of gold!" he was shouting; "absurd! you are a pack of heathen thieves!"

"For Heaven's sake, don't quarrel with them, captain," I cried, "or they will murder you!"

"Murder me? Pooh! Nonsense! They are not savages here, and while the Union Jack floats at our——"

"Oh, hang the Union Jack! Much they care for that, here. I tell you, Captain, that murder goes unpunished on this confounded island. Poor Lennox is dead!"

"Lennox dead!"

"Yes, and you shall share the same fate for your insolence!" exclaimed the harbour official, rushing upon Murdoch, but at that moment a white figure interposed, and held the man back with a commanding gesture.

It was my betrothed who had come down to the landing-stage, a travelling-bag in her hand—evidently meaning business. As the daughter of an M.P., she exercised considerable rights, and thus Melia saved the captain's life. We all jumped into the boat which was waiting for us, made for the offing where our ship lay, and soon weighed anchor, bound for Old England.

Melia has now got quite into our ways, and never speaks of her native country and its amiable customs. Perhaps that is the reason why my narrative has been received in some quarters with that incredulity with which sceptical people look upon the most veracious of travellers' stories.

L. E. Stephens.

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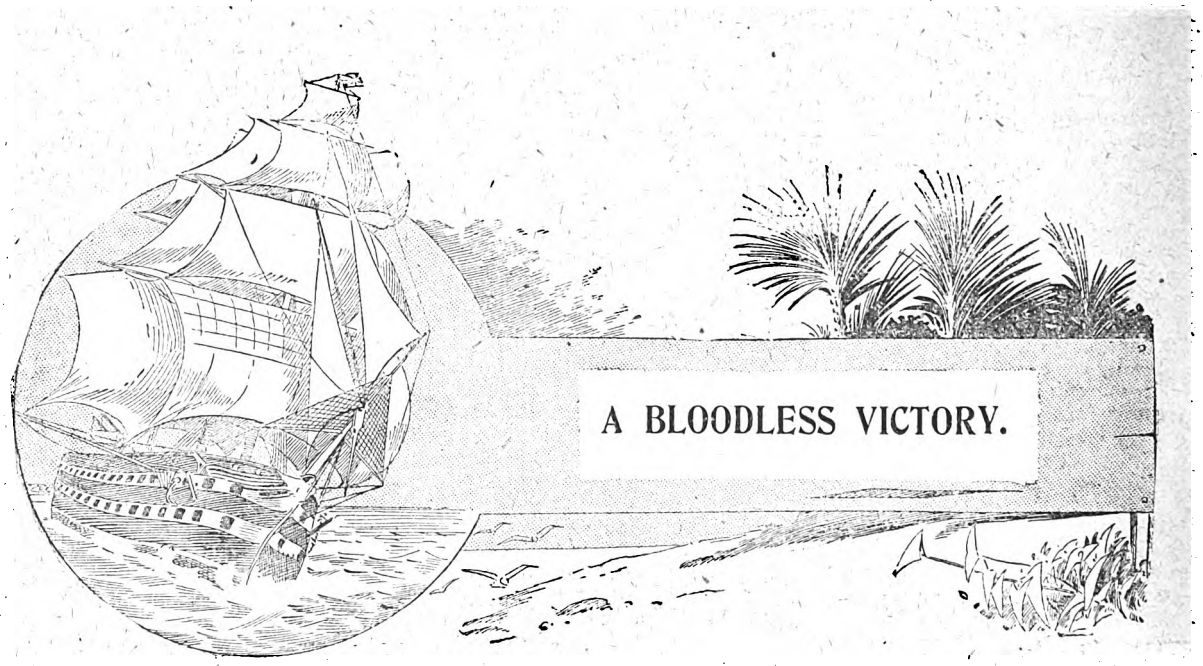

A BLOODLESS VICTORY.

THE utmost secrecy had attended the construction of Her Majesty's cruiser *Scourge*. Her keel was laid in the large stone dry-dock at the Chatham Dockyard, about which a high board fence had been erected to exclude prying eyes. The material for her hull had been obtained from several manufacturers, thus baffling any attempt to discover the mutual relations of the various parts.

The further precaution was taken, after a certain amount of progress had been made upon her, of not permitting the men at work upon one portion of her hull to roam to other parts, a few reliable naval officers and trustworthy foremen being the only ones who had seen her develop in her entirety. She did not emerge from her hidden retreat until ready for sea in every particular, when, with a picked crew, she proceeded to sea at once, two weeks after the outbreak of the Anglo-French war of 1903.

As she steamed out of the harbour there was nothing in her external appearance to distinguish her notably from a second-class steel cruiser of about 3,000 tons, and a very commonplace one at that. Whatever secrets she embodied were evidently internal.

Discriminating eyes, however, quickly observed that she carried no guns and was not fitted with sponsons, ports or other places for locating them, and then it was at once recalled that, while she had been liberally supplied before leaving the dock yard with general equipment, coal and other stores, no armament or ammunition whatever had been conveyed on board, excepting three or four small quick-firing guns and a couple of maxims, and as the vessel stood out to Spithead it was seen that even these were mounted in such positions as to indicate their use solely for repelling torpedo-boat attacks.

She was practically an unarmed as well as an unarmoured vessel, and the theory at once arose that she might be merely intended to serve as a dispatch boat, after all. Yet if such was the case, no reason could be assigned for the jealous secrecy with which she had been guarded and a further obstacle to this theory was the fact that she had put to sea recklessly in the very face of several large cruisers of the enemy which were well known to be hovering off the coast. Opinion soon became about equally divided as to whether the Admiralty were extremely foolhardy or extremely sagacious.

At any rate, as the vessel steamed out into the cruiser infested Channel, no particular trepidation was discernible in the deportment of those on board. On the contrary, there was an evident eagerness to fall in with one of the enemy's ships, and in expressing this desire, no qualification was made as to the opponent's offensive or defensive powers, although several ventured the hope that the vessel encountered might be the *Carnot*, a huge, powerful cruiser of 14,000 tons displacement and twenty-two knots speed, carrying fourteen large guns in her main battery, and about thirty smaller quick-firing guns in her secondary battery.

This vessel had already wrought considerable havoc with the British mercantile service in the brief period that had elapsed since the declaration of war, and had lately sunk H.M.S. *Raglan*, a much larger vessel than the *Scourge*. The *Carnot* was now known to be off the Channel Islands, and much regret was expressed on the *Scourge* when night fell and nothing resembling her, or any other hostile vessel, for that matter, had been sighted.

The men were loth to go to their hammocks at "pipe down," most of the officers remained on deck until a late hour and it was with decided disappointment that Captain Pitner, the commanding officer, informed the new officer of the deck, when the watch was called at midnight, that for his part he preferred acting as a look-out himself throughout the night to entrusting that duty to men who did not seem to have eyes strong enough to sight a French cruiser in their way.

Yet not a light was sighted during the night, and when day broke the captain was thoroughly disgusted.

"Perfectly outrageous!" he exclaimed, impatiently, to the navigating lieutenant who stood by his side on the

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bridge, sipping his morning coffee. "For over a week these chaps have been constantly sighted in this part of the Channel, and here we are, all hands and the cook, on the look-out for twenty hours, and not a single one in sight. If we were a Thames penny steamer or an old gunboat, we would have struck a dozen an hour after leaving the Needles. Here," he added, after a pause, dropping a conversational tone for one of command, "I see only one thing to do. Cherbourg bears about south-south-west. Put the ship on that course and keep her on it until something turns up, even if it runs us into the harbour!"

Hardly had the helm been put over when a clear, exultant cry of "Sail, ho!" came down from the mast-head.

"Where away?" eagerly asked the officers on the bridge, in a breath.

"Broad off the starboard beam, sir."

"Can you make her out?"

"Yes, sir. A large steamer, bows on."

The *Scourge's* engines were at once stopped and she lay in wait for the approaching craft, which, as she drew nearer, was seen plainly to be a man-of-war, and the dense, black smoke that soon arose from her funnels showed that she had made a similar estimate of the *Scourge's* character and was putting on the forced draught to overhaul her.

"Shall I call all hands, sir?" inquired the officer of the deck.

"It is unnecessary," coolly replied Captain Pitner. "Let the watch below sleep until the usual hour. We shall only need the engineer's force and the artificers of the watch on deck for the present. You may hoist the colours. Ah, that is encouraging," he continued, closely scrutinizing the approaching vessel through the glass. "She appears to be a battleship, and flies the tricolour. Send for Mr. Kittrell, call the after duct's crews to quarters and tell Mr. Bootes to place his division in readiness for action and await orders. Head straight to windward, Mr. Gibson, and signal 'full speed' to the engine room—that is only fifteen knots, and our friend the enemy is surely making eighteen or twenty."

The big screws revolved, the cruiser headed away from her pursuer and stood on, as if straining every nerve to escape. On came the big French warship, gaining every minute. As she drew nearer, it was plain to every eye that she was a powerful vessel. Through the glass it could be seen that numerous sponsons jutted from her great black hull, indicating an extensive battery, and a closer inspection showed a threatening turret on her bows, from which protruded two particularly heavy guns.

Closer and closer she came, until only five miles separated the two vessels. Then a hazy puff rose from the pursuer's turret, a dark object hurtled past the *Scourge* and with a dull roar exploded a hundred yards ahead of her.

"Fairly good shot, that," quietly remarked the *Scourge's* cool commander. "In fact, too devilish good, for a starter. This seems to be the proper time to press the button."

At this he pressed his thumb to a button in the chart house; an answering ring showed that the signal had been received and understood below. A sepulchral voice from a speaking tube reported that the "discharge valves are in action, sir," and with a satisfied "Very good, await signal," the *Scourge's* commander once more fastened his keen eyes to the glass.

From now there was a marked increase in the interest with which those on the British cruiser regarded their pursuer. Without awaiting reveille, those below had come on deck and the rails were soon lined with eyes gazing intently astern.

"Be careful, everybody," sternly ordered Captain Pitner, immediately adding, in a pleasanter tone, "for about twenty minutes."

As he spoke another and another shot came from the enemy's ship, both shells, like the first, exploding ahead of the English cruiser.

As the foe drew nearer, within effective range of his smaller guns, several more shots came from the latter, one striking the signal yard arm, bursting and scattering fragments on the deck, fortunately without hurting anyone.

Then there was a pause. One, two, three minutes passed and not another missile came. As he pressed another signal button, a smile crept over Captain Pitner's face, which was quickly reflected on all.

Excited comments passed from mouth to mouth and then a spontaneous cheer arose from the English throats. Still the Frenchman came on, until only two miles distant.

"Starboard the helm," came the order to the *Scourge's* officer of the deck. "Go off a bit and then run parallel to the enemy's course. If he forges ahead, follow in his wake, but he'll slow down soon. When he fires again it will be with the Union Jack at the peak. Meanwhile, pipe the watch below to breakfast and have the watch on deck break out the grappling gear. Make all preparations for taking possession of the prize and notify me when we are under steerage way alongside. I am going below for a short nap now."

* * * * *

Two days after the date of the above events the Secretary of the Admiralty received the following official communication from Portsmouth:

H.M.S. *Scourge* (Second class cruiser),
Spithead.

April —, 1899.

The Right Honorable ——, Secretary of the Admiralty.

Sir,—I have the honour to report that I arrived here this day, bringing in as a prize the French battleship *Carnot*, which was captured by the vessel under my command in the English Channel on the above date.

Both vessels are intact in every particular, and I have this day transferred 523 prisoners to the custody of the Dockyard authorities.

I would respectfully state that the action of the hypnocyanogen, and the apparatus for its liberation installed on this ship, fully justified every expectation. The two after liquor-ducts were put in operation, when the *Carnot* was five miles astern, and to leeward. The hypnocyanic liquor apparently vaporized as soon as it came in contact with the sea-water, and was quite invisible but, according to the subsequent reports of prisoners, its effects were practically instantaneous upon the *Carnot's* people.

Those in the magazines and the engine and fire rooms were the last to lose consciousness, averaging ten minutes after the first man succumbed on deck. Data are lacking as to the period of the gas's influence, as the medical staff of the *Scourge* revived the victims rapidly and promptly, by means of the prescribed restoratives, as soon as we took possession.

I regret to report two casualties in connection with the capture, one of the *Carnot's* enlisted men having received a contusion by falling from the ladder of a military mast, which he had started to ascend when overcome by the fumes, and another having an eye badly inflamed from a hot cinder which fell and rested upon it while he was lying prone and unconscious upon the deck. Both men, however, are now in hospital and will soon recover.

Awaiting the orders of the department, I am very respectfully, your obedient servant,

S. E. Pitner,
Captain, Commanding.

W. E. S.

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THE ANGEL OF THE REVOLUTION

By GEORGE GRIFFITH

CHAPTER LXX. (*continued.*)

On the 8th of January a swift warship, attended by two dynamite cruisers, left Portsmouth, bound for Odessa. She had on board the last of the Czars of Russia and those of his generals and Ministers who had been taken prisoners with him on Muswell Hill. A thousand feet overhead floated the *Ariel*, under the command of Alexis Mazanoff.

From Odessa the prisoners were taken by train to Moscow. There, in the Central Convict Depôt, they met their families and the officials whose share in their crimes made it necessary to bring them under the sentence pronounced by Natas. They were chained together in squads, Czar and Prince, noble and official, exactly as their own countless victims had been in the past, and so they were taken with their wives and children by train to Ekaterinenburg.

Although the railway extended as far as Tomsk, Mazanoff made them disembark here and marched them by the Great Siberian Road to the Pillar of Farewells on the Asiatic frontier. There they, as so many thousands of heart-broken despairing men and women had done before them, looked their last on Russian soil.

They were halted for the night in the clearing in which the Pillar stands, and when the grey light of the winter's morning broke over the snow-laden trees the men were formed up in line with the sleighs carrying the woman and children in the rear. When all was ready Mazanoff gave the word: "Forward!" the whips of the Cossacks cracked, and the mournful procession moved slowly onward into the vast, white, silent wilderness, out of which none save the guards were destined ever to emerge again.

EPILOGUE.

"And on Earth Peace!"

The winter and summer of 1905 passed in unbroken tranquility all over Europe and the English-speaking world. The nations, at last utterly sickened of bloodshed by the brief but awful experience of the last six months of 1904, earnestly and gladly accepted the new order of things. From first to last of the war the slaughter had averaged more than a million of fighting men a month, and fully five millions of non-combatants, men, women, and children, had fallen victims to famine and disease, or had been killed during the wholesale destruction of fortified towns by the war balloons of the League. At the lowest calculation the invasion of England had cost four million lives.

It was an awful butcher's bill, and when the peoples of Europe awoke from the delirium of war, to look back upon the frightful carnival of death and destruction, and to realise that all this desolation and ruin had come to pass in little more than seven months, so deep a horror of war and all its abominations possessed them that they hailed with delight the safeguards provided against it by the new European constitution which was made public at the end of March.

It was a singularly short and simple document considering the immense changes which it introduced. It contained only five clauses. Of these the first proclaimed the supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon Federation in all matters of international policy, and set forth the penalties, to be incurred by any State that made war upon another.

The second constituted an International Board of Arbitration and Control, composed of all the Sovereigns of Europe and their Prime Ministers for the time being, with the new President of the United States, the Governor-General of Canada, and the President of the now federated Australasian Colonies. This Board was to meet in sections every year in the various capitals of Europe, and collectively every five years in London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Rome, and New York in rotation. There was no appeal from its decision save to the Supreme Council of the Federation, and this appeal could only be made with the consent of the President of that Council, given after the facts of the matter in dispute had been laid before him in writing.

The third clause dealt with the rearrangement of the European frontiers. The Rhine from Karlsruhe to Basle was made the political as well as the natural boundary between France and Germany. The ancient kingdom of Poland was restored, with the frontiers it had possessed before the First Partition in 1773, and a descendant of Kosciusko, elected by the votes of the adult citizens of the reconstituted kingdom, was placed upon the throne. Turkey in Europe ceased to exist as a political Power. Constantinople was garrisoned by British and Federation troops, and the country was administered for the time being by a Provisional Government under the presidency of Lord Cromer, who was responsible only to the Supreme Council. The other States were left undisturbed.

The fourth and fifth clauses dealt with land, property, and law. All tenures of land existing before the war were cancelled at a stroke, and the soil of each country was declared to be the sole and inalienable property of the State. No occupiers were disturbed who were turning the land to profitable account, or who were making use of a reasonable area as a residential estate, but the great landowners in the country and the ground landlords in the towns ceased to exist as such, and all private incomes derived from the rent of the land were declared illegal and so forfeited.

All incomes unearned by productive work of hand or brain were subjected to a progressive tax, which reached fifty per cent. when the income amounted to £10,000 a year. It is almost needless to say that these clauses raised a tremendous outcry among the limited classes they affected; but the only reply made to it by the President of the Supreme Council was "that honestly earned incomes paid no tax, and

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that the idle and useless classes ought to be thankful to be permitted to exist at any price. The alternative of the tax would be compulsory labour paid for at its actual value by the State." Without one exception the grumblers preferred to pay the tax.

All rents, revised according to the actual value of the produce or property, were to be paid direct to the State. As long as he paid his rent-tax no man could be disturbed in the possession of his holding. If he did not pay it the non-payment was to be held as presumptive evidence that he was not making a proper use of it and he was to receive a year's notice to quit; but if at the end of that time he had amended his ways the notice was to be revoked.

In all countries the Civil and Criminal Codes of Law were to be amalgamated and simplified by a committee of judges appointed directly by the Parliament with the assent of the Sovereign.

The fifth clause of the Constitution plainly stated that no man was to be expected to obey a law that he could not understand, and that the Supreme Council would uphold no law which was so complicated that it needed a legal expert to explain it.

It is almost needless to say that this clause swept away at a blow that pernicious class of hired advocates who had for ages grown rich on the weakness and the dishonesty of their fellow-men. In after years it was found that the abolition of the professional lawyer had furthered the cause of peace and progress quite as efficiently as the prohibition of standing armies had done.

On the conclusion of the war the aerial fleet was increased to twenty-five vessels exclusive of the flagship. The number of war-balloons was raised to fifty, and three millions of Federation soldiers were held ready for active service until the conclusion of the war in the East between the Moslems and Buddhists. By November the Moslems were victors all along the line, and during the last week of that month the last battle between Christian and Moslem was fought on the southern shore of the Bosphorus.

All communications with the Asiatic and African shores of the Mediterranean were cut as soon as it became certain that Sultan Mohammed Reshad, at the head of a million and a half of victorious Moslems, and supported by Prince Abbas of Egypt at the head of seven hundred thousand more, was marching to the reconquest of Turkey. The most elaborate precautions were taken to prevent any detailed information as to the true state of things in Europe reaching the Sultan, as Tremayne and Arnold had come to the conclusion that it would be better, if he persisted in courting inevitable defeat, that it should fall upon him with crushing force and stupefying suddenness, so that he might be the more inclined to listen to reason afterwards.

The Mediterranean was patrolled from end to end by air-ships and dynamite cruisers, and aerial scouts marked every movement of the victorious Sultan until it became absolutely certain that his objective point was Scutari. Meanwhile, two millions of men had been concentrated between Galata and Constantinople, while another million occupied the northern shore of the Dardanelles. An immense force of warships and dynamite cruisers swarmed between Gallipoli and the Golden Horn. Twenty air-ships and forty-five war-balloons lay outside Constantinople, ready to take the air at a moment's notice.

The conqueror of Northern Africa and Southern Asia had only a very general idea as to what had really happened in Europe. His march of conquest had not been interrupted by any European expedition. The Moslems of India had exterminated the British garrisons, and there had been no attempt at retaliation or vengeance, as there had been in the days of the Mutiny. England, he knew, had been invaded, but according to the reports which had reached him, none of the invaders had ever got out of the island alive, and then the English had come out and conquered Europe. Of the wonderful doings of the aerial fleets only the vaguest rumours had come to his ears, and these had been so exaggerated and distorted, that he had but a very confused idea of the real state of affairs.

The Moslem Forces were permitted to advance without the slightest molestation to Scutari and Lamsaki, and on the evening of the 28th of November the Sultan took up his quarters in Scutari. That night he received a letter from the President of the Federation, setting forth succinctly and yet very clearly, what had actually taken place in Europe, and calling upon him to give his allegiance to the Supreme Council, as the other sovereigns had done, and to accept the over-lordship of Northern Africa and Southern Asia in exchange for Turkey in Europe. The letter concluded by saying that the immediate result of refusal to accept these terms would be the destruction of the Moslem armies on the following day. Before midnight, Tremayne received the Sultan's reply. It ran thus:

"In the name of the Most Merciful God.

"From MOHAMMED RESHAD, Commander of the Faithful, to ALAN TREMAYNE, Leader of the English.

"I have come to retake the throne of my fathers, and I am not to be turned back by vain and boastful threats. What I have won with the sword I will keep with the sword, and I will own allegiance to none save God and His holy Prophet who have given me the victory. Give me back Stamboul and my ancient dominions, and we will divide the world between us. If not, we must fight. Let the reply to this come before daybreak. "MOHAMMED."

No reply came back; but during the night the dynamite cruisers were drawn up within half a mile of the Asiatic shore with their guns pointing southward over Scutari, while other warships patrolled the coast to detect and frustrate any attempt to transport guns or troops across the narrow strip of water. With the first glimmer of light the two aerial fleets took the air, the war-balloons in a long line over the van of the Moslem army, and the air-ships spread out in a semicircle to the southward. The hour of prayer was allowed to pass in peace, and then the work of death began.

The war-balloons moved slowly forward in a straight line at an elevation of four thousand feet, sweeping the Moslem host from van to rear with a ceaseless hail of melinite and cyanogen bombs. Great projectiles soared silently up from the water to the north, and where they fell buildings were torn to fragments, great holes were blasted into the earth, and every human being within the radius of the explosion was blown to pieces, or hurled stunned to the ground. But more mysterious and terrible than all were the effects of the assault delivered by the air-ships, which, divided into squadrons, swept hither and thither in wide curves, with the sunlight shining on their silvery hulls and their long slender guns, smokeless and flameless, hurling the most awful missiles of all far and wide, over a scene of butchery and horror that beggared all description.

In vain the gallant Moslems looked for enemies in the flesh to confront them. None appeared save a few sentinel's across the Bosphorous. And still the work of slaughter went on, pitiless and passionless as the earthquake or the thunderstorm. Millions of shots were fired into the air without result, and by the time the rain of death had been falling without intermission for two hours, an irresistible panic fell upon the Moslem soldiery. They had never met enemies like these before, and, brave as lions and yet simple as children, they looked upon them as something more than human, and with one accord they flung away their weapons and raised their hands in supplication to the sky. Instantly the aerial bombardment ceased, and within an hour East and West had shaken hands, Sultan Mohammed had accepted the terms of the Federation, and the long warfare of Cross and Crescent had ceased, as men hoped, for ever

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Then the proclamation was issued, disbanding the armies of Britain and the Federation and the forces of the Sultan. The warships steamed away westward on their last voyage to the South Atlantic, beneath whose waves they were soon to sink with all their guns and armaments for ever. The war-balloons were to be kept for purposes of transportation of heavy articles to Aeria, while the fleet of air-ships was to remain the sole effective fighting force in the world.

While these events were taking place in Europe, those who had been banished as outcasts from the society of civilised men by the terrible justice of Natas had been plodding their weary way, in the tracks of the thousands they had themselves sent to a living grave, along the Great Siberian Road to the hideous wilderness, in the midst of which lie the mines of Kara. From the Pillar of Farewells to Tiumen, from thence to Tomsk—where they met the first of the released political exiles returning in a joyous band to their beloved Russia—and thence to Irkutsk, and then over the ice of Lake Baikal, and through the awful frozen desert of the Trans-Baikal Provinces, they had been driven like cattle, until the remnant that had survived the horrors of the awful journey reached the desolate valley of the Kara and were finally halted at the Lower Diggings.

Of nearly three hundred strong and well fed-men who had said good-bye to liberty at the Pillar of Farewells, only a hundred and twenty pallid and emaciated wretches stood shivering in their rags and chains when the muster was called on the morning after their arrival at Kara. Mazanoff and his escort had carried out their part of the sentence of Natas to the letter. The arctic blasts from the Tum-dras, the forced march, the chain and the scourge had done their work, and more than half the exiled convicts had found in nameless graves along the road, respite from the long horrors of the fate which awaited the survivors.

The first name called in the last muster was Alexander Romanoff. "Here," came in a deep hollow tone from the gaunt and ragged wreck of the giant who twelve months before had been the stateliest figure in the brilliant galaxy of European Royalty.

"Your sentence is hard labour in the mines for——" The last word was never spoken, for ere it was uttered the tall and still erect form of the dethroned Autocrat suddenly shrank together, lurched forward, and fell with a choking gasp and a clash of chains upon the hard-trampled snow. A stream of blood rushed from his white, half-open lips, and when they went to raise him he was dead.

If ever son of woman died of a broken heart it was Alexander Romanoff, last of the tyrants of Russia. Never had the avenging hand of Nemesis, though long delayed, fallen with more precise and terrible justice. On the very spot on which thousands of his subjects and fellow-creatures, innocent of all crime save a desire for progress, had worn out their lives in torturing toil to provide the gold that had gilded his luxury, he fell as the Idol fell of old in the temple of Dagon.

He had seen the blasting of his highest hopes in the hour of their apparent fruition. He had beheld the destruction of his army and the ruin of his dynasty. He had seen kindred and friends and faithful servants sink under the nameless horrors of a fate he could do nothing to alleviate, and with the knowledge that nothing but death could release them from it, and now at the last moment death had snatched from him even the poor consolation of sharing the sufferings of those nearest and dearest to him on earth.

This happened on the 1st of December, 1905, at nine o'clock in the morning. At the same hour Arnold leapt the *Ithuriel* over the Ridge, passed down the Valley of Aeria like a flash of silver light, and dropped to earth on the shores of the lake. In the same grove of palms which had witnessed their despairing betrothal he found Natasha swinging in a hammock, with a black-eyed, six-weeks-old baby nestling in her bosom, and her own loveliness softened and etherealised by the sacred grace of motherhood.

"Welcome, my lord!" she said, with a bright flush of pleasure and the sweetest smile even he had ever seen transfiguring her beauty, and stretching out her hand in greeting as he approached, "Does the King come in peace?"

"Yes, Angel mine! the Empire that you asked for is yours. There is not a regiment of men under arms in all the civilised world. The last battle has been fought and won, and so there is peace on earth at last!"

The End.

HOW TO BEAT THE BOERS.

A Pamphlet that is Creating a Sensation.

Price Sixpence. ***At all Newsagents.***

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"An excellent idea. My own private idea is that the future of musketry in action lies in the direction of high-angle dropping fire, against which trenches and parapets are useless. I have been endeavouring to perfect a means for making this reasonably accurate, and I think that I have succeeded. Wishing you well in your attempt to drive your point home."

Sir Charles Dilke says:

"I have read Mr. Frank Harris's pamphlet with interest, as I do everything which comes from its author's pen."

The *St. James's Gazette* says:

"We have received a brilliant pamphlet embodying a "Conversation in Hades," written by Mr. Frank Harris, which is published this morning. We are far from endorsing all the opinions expressed in these pages: indeed, with many of them we are very obviously at variance. But in spite of that, we believe they contain the right answer to a question which has hitherto been asked in vain by every Englishman."

HOW TO BEAT THE BOERS.

PRICE SIXPENCE.

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ANYHOW, YOU SHOULD NOT FAIL TO GET:

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Zox Cures Influenza

ZOX is the discovery of a London Chemist, who found it of a remarkable benefit for Influenza patients. It is free from injurious substance, as certified by Dr. A. B. Griffiths, F.R.S.E. 1/- box of ZOX Powders, and 1/1½ bottle of ZOX Tonic is Guaranteed to cure any ordinary case of Influenza Hundreds of grateful letters. ZOX CO., 11 Hatton Garden, London, E.C.

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I was for years; by chance I came across a simple home remedy that reduced me from 17st. to 10st. 12lbs., and I will willingly send particulars free to any sufferer enclosing stamp. Mrs. L. E. Fell, 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

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Send me an envelope (stamped and addressed) and I will tell you how to remove all superfluous hair free of charge. (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Miss E. V. (Room 3), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

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Every man suffering from Varicocele and the allied troubles, should send for treatise, describing their Causes, Symptoms, Results, and Successful and Painless Treatment without surgical operation or the use of cumbersome trusses and electrical appliances. Will be sent sealed, post free, three stamps.

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Send stamps or P.O. for 1s. 1½d. for sample 12 packets to

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HEADACHE and NEURALGIA

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To ANYONE HAVING THE LEAST DIFFICULTY, it will be sent post free for 12 Stamps by "KAPUTINE Ltd.," Huddersfield; or, on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope, A. M. Kaputine, Huddersfield, you will receive a free sample.

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Refuse Substitutes and demand "KAPUTINE," the Safe Remedy. There is no substitute "LIKE IT"; nothing "AS GOOD"; nothing "SIMILAR."

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The Brain Gymnasium.

On this page, under the title, "The Brain Gymnasium," appear each week a series of puzzles calculated to occupy the attention of the competitors with interest and profit to themselves, during the long winter evenings. Many of the tasks set are comparatively easy of solution, while others are designed with a view to taxing the abilities of the most proficient in this direction.

In these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the sender of the greatest number of correct solutions, and to the senders of the ten next highest number of correct ones will be presented either one of our silver-plated pencil cases or a copy of a popular six-shilling novel. Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, Short Stories, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by Monday, March 12th, 1900.

No. 52.

Divide 101 into three parts so that the first and second parts added together make the third, and the second and third parts added make the first.

No. 53.

Take words signifying "to put together," "a moiety," "to baffle," and "assistance," and with the letters contained in them form five other words, which, read backwards, will give the names of two familiar flowers.

No. 54.

Form one word from two words signifying "a dance," and "suitable," and then behead it four times so that complete words of the following parts of speech are left: a verb, an adjective, an adverb, and a verb.

No. 55.

I am something of which every reader of *Short Stories* is fond. Divide me into two, and it is sometimes necessary to make my first, in order to obtain my whole. There can be no doubt about my second. What am I? Trying to solve this puzzle will perhaps give you the correct answer.

No. 56.

A C E G I M N N.

From the above letters select three which will form a word, and then, adding one of the remaining letters each time, form five other words.

No. 57.

Replace the following with words, the initials of which will form the name of a well-known statesman:

A regiment in the British Army.
A quadruped much in use in South Africa.
Weapons of war.
A reserve of the Army.
A body of troops.
The standard of a regiment.
A list of soldiers.
An officer in the Army.
Great guns.
Foot soldiers.
One of the divisions of Africa.

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Nos. 28 to 33.

In this competition twenty-two competitors were absolutely correct. We have added to the prizes offered (viz., £2 and ten silver plated pencil-cases) and are forwarding to each of the following a postal order for two shillings, together with one of the pencil-cases.

John Boyd, 32 Stevenson Drive, Langside, Glasgow.
D. Ryan, jun., 16 Crow Street, Dublin.
J. H. Cockerill, 17 Essex Street, Kingsland Road, N.
N. Parley, 6 Station Road, Harlesden, N.W.
C. Jupp, 84 Wellesley Road, Croydon.
Miss S. Kemp, 103 Braybrooke Road, Hastings.
G. Lewey, Limehouse Basin, West India Dock, E.
A. W. Chapman, 128 Effra Road, Wimbledon.
W. C. Lee, 160 Shaw Heath, Stockport.
James McCormick, 90 Talbot Street, Dublin.
Miss F. G. Pearson, 8 Cecil Avenue, Horton, Bradford.
M. Carpenter, 4 Greencroft Gardens, South Hampstead.
James Thain, Longfellow House, 29A Palmerston Road, Bowes Park, N.
W. Henderson, 26 Princes Street, Perth.
T. F. Moore, 11 Lorne Street, Fairfield, Liverpool.
W. Gyde, The Barracks, Warley.
J. M. Child, 46 Wilson Street, Derby.
H. B. Thompson, Bracknell, Berks.
E. Hutchings, 4 Kingsgate Street, High Holborn.
C. H. Poynter, 22 Exmoor Road, Southampton.
James White, 11 Tobin Street, Liverpool.
M. W. Daws, 21 Parliament Street, Hull.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES

Appearing in No. 580, February 10th, 1900.

No. 34.
NIGH
IDLE
GLUE
HEED

No. 35. Medway.

No. 36.
1. Learning is better than houses, lands, or money.
2. So long as you are ignorant, be not ashamed to learn.
3. Idleness is the parent of vice and misery.
4. A good word for a bad word is worth much, and costs little.
5. Oil and truth will get uppermost at last.
6. A good name will shine for ever.
7. A bad wound heals; a bad name kills.
8. Better to be alone than in bad company.
9. Doing nothing is doing ill.
10. Say well is good, but do well is better.

No. 37. HOTTENTOT.
No. 38. SANDFORD and MERTON.
No. 39. ASPIRATES.

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" half	6 5 0

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LAST GRAND

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Open to all Prize-Winners taking up their Machines in this Competition.

£100 Motor Car
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£15 Cycle
£15 Mahogany Sideboard
£15 Fur Overcoat
£15 Lawn Tennis Set
£15 Gold Chain
£15 Cornet and Music
£15 Summer House
£15 Canadian Canoe

£15 Ivory and Ebony Chess
£15 Fishing Tackle
£15 Drawing-Room Clock
£15 Tea Service
£15 Box of Tools
£15 Silver Cigar Cabinet
£15 Proof Engraving
£15 Golf Set

£15 Cricket Set
£15 Violin and Music
£15 Mandoline and Music
£15 Harmonium
£15 Kitchen Utensils
£15 River Punt
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£15 Library of New Books
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£15 Conjuring Tricks
£15 Marquee Tent
£15 Fireproof Safe, or
£15 Cash or Bank Notes.

The above is only a PARTIAL LIST of the Free Prizes now offered. We have now awarded considerably over £8,200 Value in Prizes. Full particulars of Prizes, Competitions, &c., will be sent to each one entitled to compete.

RESULT OF COMPETITION JUST CLOSED.

£100 in Cash.—WILLIAM SILL, 12 Winstanley Place, Bouston, near Kendal, Westmoreland.

£30 in Cash.—VALENTINE GAMBRILL, Monks Horton, Kent.

£15 in Cash.—OWEN OWENS, Maldwyn Stores, Llandegfan, Menai Bridge.

£10 in Cash.—H. L'ESTRANGE BURGESS, Bayham House, Sevenoaks.

40 *Persons have Won* **£23** *Cycles Free of all Cost.* **There were over 90 more Cash Prizes than there were Competitors.**

In this, the last Free Prize Competition that will be promoted, it is a matter of utter impossibility for any competitor not to receive an award without having to pay anything at all save the two penny stamps enclosed for postage. The only instance where any payment is made to us, is when a competitor has been successful in gaining a Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, or Consolation Prize, in one of our ordinary competitions. A nominal sum has then to be paid according to this advertisement for a Cycle which 18 of the World's Greatest Critics, 12 Cycling Papers, 249 Newspapers, and 5,845 Riders have pronounced, and pronounced emphatically, to be well worth £15 cash in the ordinary market. We send you absolute proof of all these statements when forwarding results of competition. We have never received an adverse Press notice, or heard of a Prize-winner being dissatisfied after taking up his or her machine. All Prize Machines (which are exactly the same as those which cost £15, £16, £17, £18, or £19 in the ordinary way) are sent out strictly on approval; and the full amount paid us, together with carriage, is willingly refunded if the cycles are not fully worth, not merely what is paid for them, but our usual selling price.

WHAT TO DO.—SEND IN REPLIES EARLY.—Make up the best sentence you can out of seven words, each word commencing with a letter of T A W W T A P in proper order. Thus, for example, "They Are Well Worth The Advertised Price." This is an extract from a notice in the *Athletic Record* (now *Pastimes*) September 3rd, 1898. Enclose two penny stamps for postage of result of competition, with Catalogue, Testimonials, etc.

FIRST PRIZE: £23 A.B. SAFETY.

SECOND CLASS (9 Prizes), Similar Cycle for - - £9
THIRD CLASS (12 Prizes), Similar Cycle for - £10
FOURTH CLASS (15 Prizes), Similar Cycle for - £11
FIFTH CLASS (18 Prizes), Similar Cycle for - £12
SIXTH CLASS (20 Prizes), Similar Cycle for - £13
CONSOLATION (25 Prizes), Similar Cycle for - £14

TAKE PARTICULAR NOTICE.—Competition is NOW OPEN, and CLOSES on THURSDAY, MARCH 15, 1900.

Enclose two penny stamps for postage of Result of Competition. As so few are able to call and inspect the machines, **we guarantee to refund the full amount paid for any prize if the owner is not perfectly satisfied** with it on arrival. We desire it to be distinctly understood that we reserve to ourselves the right of increasing the number of prizes in the competition set in this paper. Results will be declared as soon as possible. Prizes unclaimed in a week or ten days are forfeited.

£100 If you can purchase our cheapest machine, brand new, from us, or any agent, dealer, shipper, or factor can buy one for less than FIFTEEN SOVEREIGNS, we will promptly hand you a £100 BANK OF ENGLAND NOTE.

84 COMPETITORS WERE DISQUALIFIED LAST TIME BY BEING TOO LATE.

SEND YOUR REPLY IMMEDIATELY TO THE MANAGING DIRECTOR, MARKING YOUR ENVELOPE, "SHORT STORIES."

A.B. CYCLE CO. LTD., 59, 60, 67, 68, & 69, CHANCERY LANE, HOLBORN, W.C.

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1900
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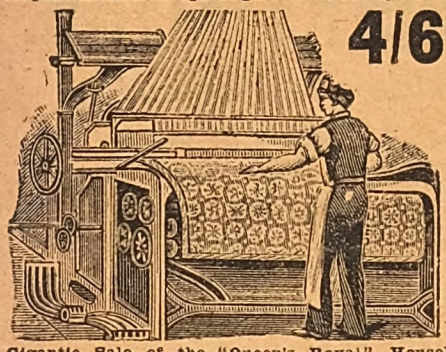
The **Richest Provision** in **Knowledge** made **Absolutely Easy** for the **Accumulation** of this **Income.** Write to Messrs. F. HODGSON & SON, Carpet Manufacturers, of the City of Leeds, who will provide you with full information, posting you free (if when writing you mention *Short Stories*, 3/3/1900), a large, amazingly interesting, valuable, instructive, and detailed Illustrated "**Spring**" Reduction Catalogue, showing you what you can save, what to buy, and where to buy Carpets, Mats and Hearthrugs of every manufacture, including Wilton, Plush, Brussels, Velvet, Antique, Foreign, and Furs, also **Queen's Royal Household, Prudential, Eclipse,** and **Alarm Carpets and Hearthrugs (Regd.).** Also Blankets, Curtains, Sheeting, &c., and a thousand other articles wanted in every household. (Copyright.)



4/6

To Readers of "Short Stories," 3/3/1900, on receipt of Postal Order or Stamps, value 4/6 (Regd.), we will send you the **Largest Genuine Reversible Carpet in Brussels Finish, with Rug,** ever sold at the price, direct from the Looms to any address, on receipt of amount. Suitable for drawing-room, dining room, bedroom, &c., bordered and woven in Brussels patterns, as an advertisement for our goods, thus saving any middle profit. Remember, these are woven, and are made of a material almost equal to Wool. **Thousands of these Carpets have been already sold at double these prices.**

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6ft. by 6ft.	2/11	REDUCED SALE PRICES.	10½ft. by 12ft.	11/6
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When ordering, please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, & any particular colour preferred

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6ft. by 7½ft.	6/0		10½ft. by 12ft.	18/0
6ft. by 9ft.	7/6		9ft. by 15ft.	19/6
8ft. by 9ft.	9/0		12ft. by 12ft.	21/0
6ft. by 12ft.	10/6		12ft. by 13½ft.	22/0
9ft. by 9ft.	11/0		12ft. by 15ft.	25/6
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A "Queen's Royal" Hearthrug, to match, size 6ft. by 3ft., price **2/-.**
SPECIAL OFFER.—3 for **5/9,** or **6** for **11/3.**

A REVERSIBLE HEARTHRUG (Regd.) to match, sent for 1/6 extra; size, 2yd. by 1yd.

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REAL BRUSSELS CARPETS.

Extraordinarily Heavy, very Best Quality, Newest and Choice Designs. In Old Gold, Sultan, Terra Cotta, Crimson, Sky, Navy, and the latest colours. With handsome Border to correspond. Guaranteed to wear for years, and to give every satisfaction.
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4½ft. by 7ft.	11/-	VELVET PILE BRUSSELS CARPET SQUARES.	9ft. by 12ft.	38/-
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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON

No. 584.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week Ending March 10th, 1900.

TWO MEN AND MARGARET.

THE sole bachelor in Waveny was ill. The full importance of this fact could only be understood by one who had dwelt in Waveny, for the little mountain town with its environment of deserted copper mines was one of the "has beens" of Queensland. Sons and brothers left it early to seek work beyond the western ranges, so that Waveny was a feminine stronghold, with a few staid fathers, and a cadet corps of little boys to vary the monotony.

The clergyman was a widower, certainly, but a misanthrope, and had been known to return gifts of slippers and comforters—therefore, when Billy Heron set up as mining agent and stockbroker, bringing with him satisfactory letters of introduction and an unlimited capacity for the enjoyment of afternoon teas, and the society of girls, Waveny awoke to new life.

Billy was not handsome, being over six feet, and not broad in proportion. His features were large and roughly hewn, but he had a quick smile, white even teeth, and a thick crop of chestnut hair, which waved Byronically from his forehead.

His inherent appreciation of womenkind individually, and in the abstract, ensured his position amongst them from the first, and he was adept enough in all manly sports to gain the approval of the fathers and brothers; in fact, it was to the training of a horse for the Werrimu amateur races that he owed his present illness—a sprained

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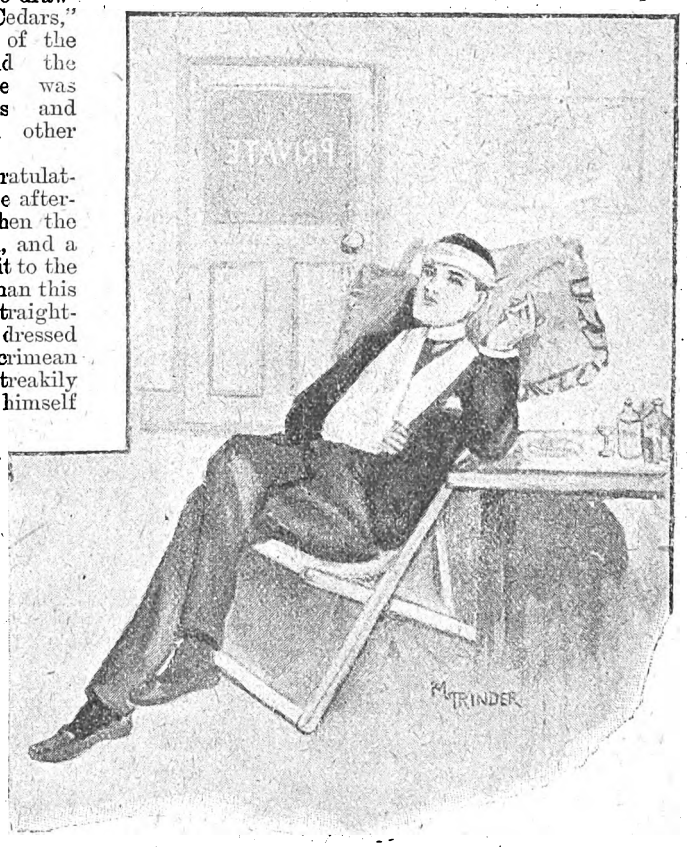
wrist, scratched face, and feverish cold, which combined to keep him to the little back parlour of his office, and the tender ministrations of the Irish servant, who brought over his dinner from the neighbouring hotel, and the little Gulf blackboy who cleaned his boots, attended to his horse, and was generally useful. At least he was apparently left to their ministrations; in reality half the girls in Waveny society were burning their faces over "invalid cookery," and the small brothers were continually running messages and carrying baskets to the office.

One warm summer's afternoon he was lying back in a canvas chair, propped up by Liberty-silk cushions. The cushions came from the drawing-room of the "Cedars," which was the home of the principal lawyer, and the oilcloth-covered table was crowded with bottles and baskets of fruit and other dainties.

He was inwardly congratulating himself on the free afternoon he was having when the office door swung open, and a visitor walked through it to the inner room. It was a man this time—a brown-faced, straight-limbed young bushman, dressed in moleskins and a crimean shirt, cleanly, but streakily washed—probably by himself in some grass-bordered, limestone creek along the track. His hat, boots, and gaiters were the worse for wear—the boots especially proclaimed the fact that he had travelled a long way on foot—as in truth he had, for his horse had died beyond Bourke during the heat wave, and work had not been plentiful along the route. There was a bright look of expectation on his face as he advanced towards Heron; the latter half rose, looking inquiringly at him.



One warm summer's afternoon he was lying back in a canvas chair.

"I'm Charlie Cliffe—but I don't expect you to know me in this rig-out."

Charlie Cliffe! In Heron's mind's eye rose the blue waters and melancholy sweep of scrub-clad cliffs of Port Jackson. He heard again the ripple of waves against the sides of the man-of-war, and the plash of trained oars as the boats brought their loads of gay society people from the jetty. For it was at an "afternoon" on *H.M.S. Orlando* that he had last seen Charlie Cliffe, the spruce young Englishman, who, as orphan, nephew and adopted son of Miles Fordham, one of Sydney's wealthiest merchants, had been welcomed by its society with open arms.

"Charlie Cliffe—great Scott! old man, I should rather think I wouldn't know you—come in and sit down—well, this beats creation—left hand please, right's incapable."

"An accident? By Jove, you have been knocked about!"

"Yes, a spill; training a mare for the Werrimu Amateur. But what brought you to this part of the world; when last we met it was at a spree on the *Orlando*. High old times you were having too."

Cliffe smiled a little sadly.

"I've known what it is to rough it since then," he said. "Uncle Miles cut up rough because I wouldn't marry to please him; a business arrangement between himself and the girl's father, and neither of the interested parties 'on.' Consequently we had a row, and I cleared out to shift for myself in the bush. Took a run to the goldfields first—can't say I made a fortune—and then became a 'sundowner,' looking for jobs. I was glad enough to work for tucker sometimes. Sometimes neither tucker nor work was on the carpet, and, well, here I am."

"It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good," said Heron. "I'm jolly glad to see you anyhow. (Here Jacky, you black imp! bring in some glasses, and be quick about it.) And where are you bound for now?"

"Sydney. Read that!" And he handed Heron a slip of paper. It was a newspaper cutting from the "Missing Friends" column, and informed Charles Standish Cliffe that if he would return to M. F. bygones should be bygones and ample restitution would be made.

"I picked that up with some scraps on a deserted cattle camp, and I made south on the strength of it. Waveny is the first railway station I have come to. Of course I could have gone by Hendra but I heard you were here, and I have come to borrow a fiver to take me down at once, so that I can see how the land lies—that is, if you think the security good enough. The old man may still wish to work his own plans, counting on the hard life to have broken me in, in which case I shall clear out again. If not, he will probably take me into the firm as he intended doing."

"Draw on me for what you like. Fordham isn't the one to take half measures; he was always fond of you;

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but you can't get a train until mid-day to-morrow. You must have a shake-down here."

"Thanks, no. I will go back to my camp to-night, but will see you in the morning and have a yarn over old times."

"Just as you like. I want to hear all you have been doing of late. As for me, things have panned out fairly well. I have got on to some fair things in mines, and the place isn't too bad—fine climate, whips of pretty girls, but wants other fellows to make things hum. By-the-way, an old friend of yours is staying here with Stephens, the lawyer. I suppose you have not forgotten Margaret Revel?"

"No, I have not forgotten her."

Cliffe's tones were even and studied, and Heron looked earnestly at the wall as he continued:

"You were talking to her when I said good-bye to you in Sydney. She had a white dress on, and a black hat, with feathers; and I thought what a well-matched pair you were. You were great friends, I think?"

"Yes, great friends, but so she was with half-a-dozen others. I expected to hear she was married long ago, or engaged at any rate."

"Not to my knowledge, and she does not seem to flirt now. Well, I always thought there was something between you two."

"I suppose I had my dreams," said Cliffe, quietly; "but the catastrophe came so soon after you left, and I had to forget them."

Heron looked thoughtful, and was about to reply when the outer door swung open, and a heavy step and a rustle of silk betokened a fresh visitor.

He looked at the clock despairingly.

"They'll begin to come in shoals, now," he said, "and goodness only knows when they will stop. Oh! come in, Mrs. Stephens. This is good of you. May I introduce my old friend, Charlie Cliffe. Awfully kind of you to take so much trouble."

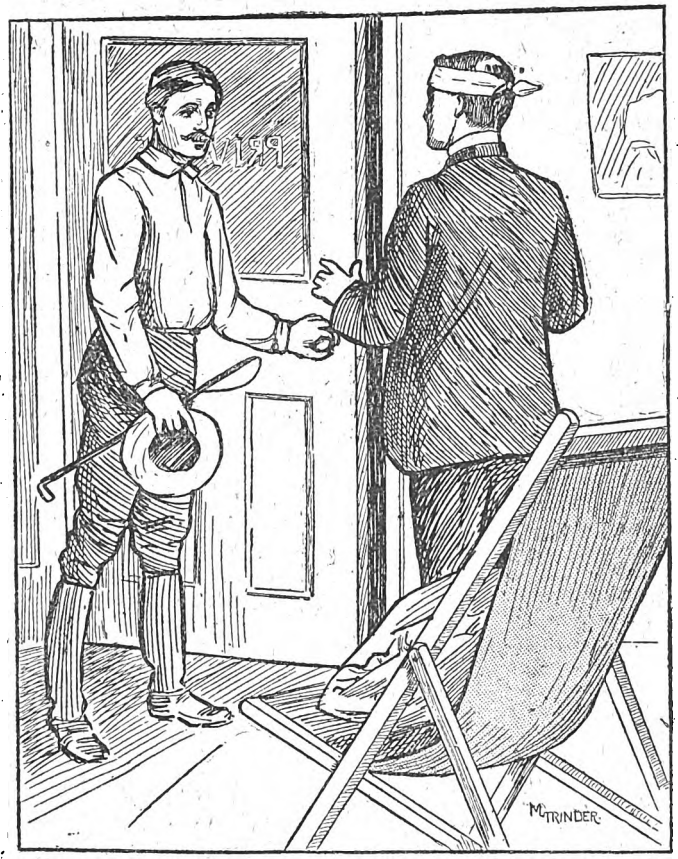
Mrs. Stephens was a large lady; she bowed stiffly to Cliffe, and deposited a basket on the table.

"How are you?" she said. "Minnie will be here directly. The dear child is all nerves; she has been quite upset since she heard Dr. Lee pronounce your symptoms to be feverish. She is bringing some black currant cordial—it is remarkably good; and how did you like the jelly? Poor Minnie was afraid it had too much flavouring in it."

The advent of Miss Minnie, in a picturesquely frilled sun-bonnet, print frock, and innocently "tucked pinafore," created a slight disturbance. She brought the cordial in a jug, and Heron shuddered as he glanced into its dismal depths. Minnie was a plump rabbit-faced little thing, with big blue eyes, and a quantity of dull black hair, and she could only look adoringly at the invalid while her stately and ample-waisted mother moved round the room inspecting the "offerings at the shrine."

Heron skilfully threw a cushion over the French novel lent him by the summer boarder—a certain Miss Smith—at Cray's Hotel, and listened deferentially to Mrs. Stephens's remarks.

"H'm—this is a Priory basket. Peaches in it, and windfalls, too, if I know anything about fruit. Easy enough to pick up a few peaches, but I'd like to see those Wycherley girls cooking for an invalid. Mrs. Rose—she is my washerwoman—lives quite close to them, and tells me the waste at that house is terrible. I really couldn't tell you—" But what Mrs. Stephens couldn't tell for once was not known, for she glanced out of the window, and became as red as a turkeycock.



Cliffe again refused the offer of a shakedown.

"There's that Miss Smith—actually coming in at your back gate. That girl seems to dispense with a chaperon altogether."

Heron jumped up, and called Jacky to open the door and Miss Smith sailed in. She was a stylishly dressed person, of uncertain age and beauty, but had fine eyes and a good figure. She bowed coldly to the Stephenses, who had not called upon her, and smiled ravishingly at the two men, and then walked to the table.

"I've brought the lotion I promised you," she said, "and I'm going to rub it in on the poor face."

She had very white hands, much beringed, and she untied the bottle slowly.

"Very good of you, Miss Smith," said Heron, inwardly thanking his stars that the application was external this time.

"Minnie," said Mrs. Stephens, sternly, "pour out a glass of the cordial. It should be taken while it is hot."

Heron looked miserable. He was under many obligations to the lawyer's family, and could not afford to offend them. Still, the mixture looked horrible.

"My throat is A 1, to-day," he began, but Mrs. Stephens was adamant.

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Minnie poured out a glassful, and Heron took the dose manfully, in spite of the fact that it was as evil-tasting as it looked.

Cliffe turned to assist Miss Smith and to hide his merriment. She was soaking a bandage in the lotion, and, taking it out, she proceeded to untie the handkerchief which bound up Heron's damaged forehead. She lingered over the task caressingly, with her deft, white hands.

"Minnie, come here at once."

The matron's words were few, but her tones said a thousand things.

"We will call again when you are disengaged," she added.

"Oh, pray don't move, Mr. Heron. We should be sorry to disturb such a charming picture," and she swept past with a rustle of silk and buckram, while timid Minnie gave one adoring backward glance—(for with her "the king could do no wrong,")—and whispered, "Take it every two hours—for my sake."

Heron returned that adoring glance with interest. With his nature he could no more have helped doing so than he could have flown.

Miss Smith smiled.

"Guess the old lady don't like me," she said. "You have offended her this time. Ah, Billy, it's all your own fault. You should not flirt with every girl in a small town like this. They are bound to compare notes some day; clever as you are, it can't last."

Heron gave her a quick, tender glance, and touched one of her beautiful hands with his own "sound" one.

"You know I do not flirt," he said softly. The lotion was really soothing, and Miss Smith looked remarkably well in the subdued light. Still he was glad that the operation was finished when the three laughing handsome Wycherley girls from the Priory came in, bringing with them a breezy sense of life and health. Tenderly sympathetic they were, but, having the sense to see that the patient was really tired, they did not stay long after the exit of Miss Smith. They were polite to Cliffe, but the real interest was in Heron. They fluttered about like a flock of white doves, and arranged their offerings of baby roses and violets in a bowl, and then they floated out again.

The men watched them cross the sunlit street to where a fourth girl was standing, apparently waiting for them. She was tall and slight, and had a lot of bronze-gold hair that looked like a halo against the sunlight, and they heard Grace Wycherley call out merrily:

"Hope we did not keep you waiting very long, Queen Margaret."

Both men watched the group until it melted away into the green shadow of the trees round the flower-set square and then Cliffe broke the silence.

"Miss Revel looks well," he said. "Do you expect her here at all?"

"No. She has not been to see me since I was laid up, although she is staying with the Stephenses. I don't think Miss Revel cares a red cent whether I live or die!" And he flung back to his chair, limping badly as he went. He was only human, and the continued spoiling was having its effect, though he would have scorned the insinuation. Miss Revel was still an unconquered citadel of indifference, and it piqued him. Besides that, he had other memories of her, and she had flirted lightly with the bright young fellow when he was amongst a score of admirers who helped to make her "coming out" year so delightful. No doubt the effect of being in the same house with poor Minnie—reduced to a state of partial idiocy by her hopeless absorbing passion—disinclined her more than ever to join the army of devotees, and she could always hear the daily bulletin from them.

Cliffe again refused the offer of a shake down. "I feel queer myself," he said—"quite a new sensation, as I've been as strong as a horse through everything. It's a well known fact that bushmen always get a cold when they first sleep indoors after camping out, and I don't want to make the one that's trying to grip me a certainty. I'll see you to-morrow, old man," and so the two friends parted.

Cliffe turned down the main street, and was crossing the corner by Craig's Hotel, when he came face to face with Margaret Revel. She started and half turned towards him. Whether her pretty frock, neatly gloved hands, and well shod feet made him doubly conscious of his own weather-beaten, shabby turn-out, I cannot say. The slip of paper in his pocket meant in all probability that he was as well off now as in the old Sydney days, but the hardship and roughness of his life during the last two years seemed the only reality; all else a dream.

In a few moments Jacky was escorting the prettiest girl in Waveny to the gap scrub.

And during those years he had striven to forget Margaret's face, and it was like the re-opening of a wound to come across her so suddenly again. Whatever it was he did not answer her look of inquiry, but passed on. There were other bushmen in a group round the bar door, and he easily mingled with them.

There was little to distinguish him from the shearers and teamsters lounging there, and Margaret wondered what had made her so suddenly think of the band playing a waltz by

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Strauss, the white deck, and the blue waters of the harbour, that were not brighter or bluer than the eyes that were looking into her own.

Cliffe walked on like a man in a dream. "I must see Uncle Fordham first," he thought; "it may not be as right as it seems."

The bright sun had disappeared in a misty mountain rain, and a cold wind swept round the shoulder of Mount Craven as he reached his camp at the Gap. He thought of Heron's comfortable room, and regretted not having accepted his hospitality. Salt junk and stale damper is not a tempting supper for a man with a bad headache and darting pains in his limbs, and Cliffe took very little time over his meal before turning in.

A hungry dingo howled weirdly in the scrubs to the left, and the curlews called from the swamp.

In spite of the cold rain Charlie felt feverish and hot, and tossed restlessly from side to side. He thought of Heron's eyes, when Margaret Revel passed, and he remembered how fascinating a man "Billy," was considered in the old Sydney days. The very fact of the girl keeping away so persistently might mean that she was interested in, and self-conscious about him, and so on, and so was torturing himself with jealous doubts as men in the throes of an absorbing passion are apt to do; and thus, the night wore away.

He made a great effort and struggled to his feet, then staggered, and pitched forward.

Meanwhile, away over in Waveny the "other" man was in a seventh heaven of delight, for Miss Revel had paid him a visit at last, accompanied by Mrs. Stephens, Minnie, and the lawyer himself, who though willing to join in the family worship of the interesting invalid, sighed pathetically for his easy chair and paper at home.

Miss Revel had not been pressed to come.

Mrs. Stephens knew that Minnie did not look well beside this bright-haired Sydney girl; but as she declared that she wanted a walk, did not mind wet feet, and thought she really ought to inquire in person as to Mr. Heron's health, and skilfully combated all other objections, they were obliged to take her.

Heron felt terribly conscious of his unshaven chin, and blamed Jacky under his breath for not having tidied up a bit, and as Miss Revel inspected his various ornaments wished fervently that some of the photos of well-known actresses were not quite so pronounced.

Minnie was happy in being able to gaze at the object of her affections, and in seeing that the black currant mixture was half gone, and Mrs. and Mr. Stephens were engaged in an animated discussion, because the latter had said that Miss Smith had fine eyes. Margaret demanded a circumstantial account of the accident, and skilfully brought the conversation round to his day's visitors.

"Minnie mentioned a Mr. Cliffe," she said. "Any relation to the one—I think his name was Charlie—whom we used to meet sometimes at your father's house?"

"The same," answered Heron, trying to conquer his wish to change the subject. "Had a row with old Miles, and cleared out to try and keep himself. He is making for Sydney again now, and I hope things will pan out all right for him."

"I was away when he left Sydney," said Miss Revel. "Report said that he was engaged to Rachael Levi, Rabbi Levi's daughter. When I returned I heard that he had quarrelled with his uncle and disappeared."

"He did not mention names, but it was over the marriage question he fell out with Fordham. No doubt Miss Levi was the lady concerned. Cliffe would only marry to suit himself. He has had a rough time, poor chap, but intends leaving by the mail to-morrow, and is coming to see me first."

"I suppose he is in town to-night?"

"No, camping over by the gap. I wanted him to take a shake-down here, especially as he did not seem quite up to the mark. This unseasonable wet weather has brought a good deal of fever about."

"He used to be a divine dancer," said Margaret. "I wonder if he knows I am here."

"Yes, he asked after you, but I don't think he cares to show up in his bush clothes. He has had hard luck, but is improved by it if anything, and is the same good old sort he used to be. Can I offer you some of these peaches, Miss Revel; they are as good as they look."

The Stephenses made a move soon afterwards. Mrs.

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Stephens had seen which way Billy Heron's eyes were attracted, and the magnet was not poor Minnie, and so the glimpse of heaven was perforce a brief one.

But about 5.30 p.m. next day Heron's cup was full, for Miss Revel slipped in through his side door to inquire after his health, and this time actually by herself.

"You look much better," she said.

"And I feel so. Sit down, and excuse me for a moment. I am sending Jacky with a note to Cliffe's camp. He has not been to see me, and I feel rather anxious."

"No, I can't stay. I really only called just to see how you were, and to tell you to be sure and get well before the Werrimu week. I have no end of gloves on Daisy Bell and the black and gold. As it is, I don't know what Mrs. Grundy and Mrs. Stephens will say if my unconventional visit becomes known," and she was gone again before Heron could turn round, leaving him to finish his note, not knowing whether to be delighted or angry first.

Margaret hurried quickly down a side street, and waited by the bridge until she saw Jacky's black face and strangely garmented form coming slowly towards her. She held her purse in her hand and intercepted him, and in a few moments Jacky was rich beyond all dreams of avarice, and was escorting the prettiest girl in Waveny to the gap scrub.

* * * * *

Of all miserable days in his life Cliffe had spent the worst, lying there in his wet clothes on the sodden ground in the grasp of rheumatic fever. Although he did not know it, he was delirious towards evening, and had given up trying to stumble townwards. The phantoms that had been stalking swiftly in and out of the dark forest aisles, leering at him with their strange inhuman faces, stopped and looked down at him, and then as suddenly disappeared again, as the clouds cleared from his brain in a last brief interval of reason. He felt that he must make another effort to reach Waveny while yet his senses were free.

He turned round slowly, bewailing at the torture the movement gave him, and then he saw coming straight towards him a tall, fair girl, whose hair against the slanting rays of the sunset looked like a halo of gold.

Was she but another of the phantoms that had been mocking him all day? Was it all a dream within a dream, and this seeming moment of sanity but a delusion like the rest? Miss Revel walked quickly towards him, followed by the black-boy, and then she stopped, her brown eyes wide with dismay.

He made a great effort, and struggled to his feet, then staggered, and pitched forward, a sound as of many waters in his ears, and through it all a woman's voice, crying, "Oh, Charlie, Charlie, my beloved, speak—only speak to me."

Comedy and tragedy are linked indissolubly in this world, and in after days Heron sometimes smiled to think how very unromantic was the medium through which he received first notice that the brightest dream of his heart was never to be a reality. Jacky was a faithful mimic, and threw into his soft, guttural tones a depth of despairing love and passion, as he clasped his ebony hands, and rolled his bright eyes, and repeated "Missie Revel's" words, "Charlie, my beloved, speak to me."

He had been giving a graphic representation of the scene of the finding of the sick man, but Heron was unprepared for this last detail. A mist seemed to rise before his eyes, and Jacky's voice, describing how he ran for the doctor, and how Cliffe was taken to the hospital, sounded further and further away.

Then he gathered himself together with an effort, and sent the astonished blackboy out of the room with injunctions to "Hold his tongue, and chop wood for an hour." And when Mrs. Stephens and Minnie came round later on to tell him the news, and to bring him a basin of gruel and wine, they were astonished to find that for once there was no admittance.

Indeed Minnie's sharp ears distinctly noted that the key was turned in the lock after they had knocked; but, being wiser than she appeared to be, persuaded her mother to raise the siege, and depart. She had seen a good deal with those innocent china-blue eyes of hers, and knew that many a heart is caught in the rebound.

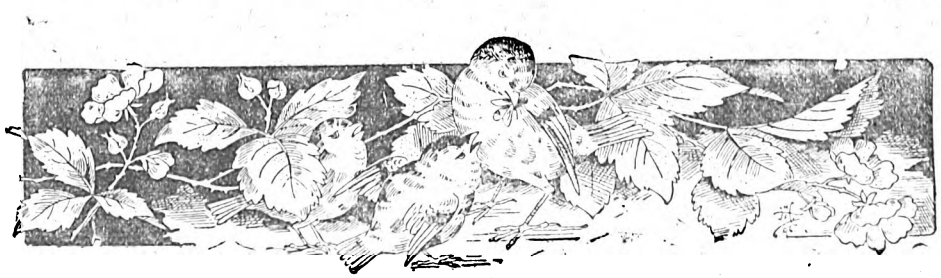
It was Heron who sent the telegram the next day, summoning Myles Fordham to what so nearly was the death-bed of his beloved and only relative, but Cliffe's strong constitution triumphed, and four weeks afterwards he was well enough to lie on the hospital's pleasant south veranda, while Margaret read to him in her soft contralto tones.

Even Mrs. Stephens, who kept so strict a guard over Waveny morals, could find no exception to this, for old Fordham proclaimed to everyone the fact that Margaret was to be his adopted daughter, inasmuch as she had consented to be Charlie's wife, a choice he thoroughly approved of, for mutual interest and anxiety had drawn the old man and the young girl very close together during those weeks of watching and waiting.

Billy Heron refused to go to Sydney and be best man at his friend's wedding, and Margaret, who sincerely liked him, was not a little hurt at his firm refusal; and wondered which of the Waveny maidens was responsible for his attachment to the place, for Billy seemed to have become a more desperate flirt than ever.

But Charlie, with a certain look in Heron's eyes still fresh in his memory, was neither offended nor surprised, for he knew that though to Margaret the world held one man only, there were two men whose world was Margaret.

Ethel Mills.



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PRINCESS FIAKI'S BIRTHDAY.

As it was winter and very cold, they had drawn round the prince the screens of precious woods, in the little hall where he sat dreaming, his arm upon an elbow-rest richly inlaid with pearl.

Magnificent robes of soft, downy silk overlapped and crossed their many-coloured collars upon the breast of Daimio, and on the shoulder and embroidered in gold on the sleeves were stars formed by five balls surrounding a sixth, the well-known coat of arms of the illustrious family of Kanga, which had no equal in power in all Japan save the family of Shendai and the family of Satsouma. Yes, this prince, who meditated thus in the depths of his palace, was very powerful, very rich, and very renowned; his people admired and feared him, his vassals were ready to die for him, his least desire was a law to all surrounding him; nevertheless to-day, he found himself exceedingly unhappy, helpless, poverty-stricken in thought and fancy: for had he not, for many days past, sought for some surprise to celebrate the birthday of his only daughter and had been able to imagine none.

It was also true that this princess, who to-morrow would be sixteen years of age, possessed all that it was possible to possess—marvellous birds, fantastic fishes, extravagant dogs, chariots, horses, palaces, everything that one could conceive of, and even marvels of which one did not dream brought specially for her from distant countries.

The Daimio told himself, shaking his head, that he had too much indulged his beloved daughter; that he should not have indulged her thus till she had exhausted—she, hardly entered upon life—all the riches of the world. Now he had nothing to offer his child, to astonish and charm her.

Still pondering, still wondering, for a long, long while through the cloudy transparency of the window, he allowed his wearied gaze to wander over the stripped garden, under the grey and weeping heavens.

"What did she really desire?"

Suddenly he sprang to his feet.

"We will see her," said he, "see her, and perhaps be able, without her suspecting anything to divine her caprice."

He turned and struck the gong hanging by a silken cord from the teeth of a monster in bronze.

Immediately the panels forming the walls glided noiselessly apart, separated to each side, permitting you to see a long perspective of room after room filled by *samourais* of service, pages, guards, and household domestics. The *samourais*—noble vassals wearing two swords—bowed profoundly before him; the pages and servants prostrated themselves, brows to the ground.

"I am going to visit my daughter," said the Daimio, gravely. "Come!"

And immediately the escort formed about him, while the guards ran in advance to clear the way.

Fiaki—that is to say, Ray of Sunlight—in a well-closed hall of her own special palace, was seated, according to custom, upon broad white mats laid upon the floor, the long folds of her magnificent trained robes billowing and spreading about her like the leaves of a gorgeous fan, tissues, muslins, silks, and satins, the most abundant of them all a sky-blue gauze figured with spiders' webs in which were caught the petals of rare flowers.

The face of this young girl was white as cream, her tiny mouth like a cherry cleft in twain, disclosing two rows of fine little rice grains; her eyebrows shaved and replaced by two little black spots made with a brush and placed high up on her brow; while her long hair, following the mode of royal fashion, was unbound and streaming down her back to lose itself in the folds of her garments.

The maids of honour formed a half-circle about their mistress; and in front of her, behind a light carved balustrade, a dancer moved slowly, waving her fan in time to the notes of the orchestra, intoning a strange, weird chant, with a *gotto*, a *biva*, three kinds of flutes, a drum, and a tambourine.

At the prince's entrance the symphony ceased, and Fiaki quickly concealed behind the spiders' webs of her sleeve the twin cherries of her lips, which was a salute to her father, tender and chaste.

He smiled with pleasure at sight of the beauty and

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grace of his idolized child. She rose to greet him, and, like a sea agitated by a sudden tempest, the silk, satin, muslin, and brocade of her skirts rustled and undulated behind her. He caressed her lovingly, heaped her with tender names, calling her his Incomparable, his Supernatural Beauty, his Perfume of Heaven; then he demanded of her if she were perfectly happy, if there was aught that she desired?

"Ah! illustrious prince! adored father!" Fiaki responded, bending backward her supple body in a pretty movement of sorrow, "how can anyone be happy when the earth suffers as now, and the sky continually drops tears? The gods have been cruel in creating winter. Not even the purity of the snow can create for me an illusion of my vanished spring."

The Daimio listened thoughtfully; then, in a deeper reverie still, returned to his apartment.

"It is certain," said he to himself, "certain that spring, and spring only, is all that Fiaki desires."

And he stopped to lend an ear to the sharp wind blowing against the palace walls.

Already the twilight was far advanced, the dark night waiting to take the gray evening's place.

"Yes, spring, spring only," murmured the unhappy Daimio, dejectedly resuming the seat that he had quitted a while ago.

Suddenly his sorrow changed to anger, and he summoned his prime minister. Nai-Dai-Tsin ran, bending low his back and auguring nothing good for himself or others from the gloomy face of his master. The Daimio was silent a moment, as if hesitating to give an order so extraordinary; but soon, with an irritated shrug of the shoulders, he spoke:

"To-morrow, Nai-Dai-Tsin," said he, "will be my daughter's birthday. I desire—do you hear me? I desire, I say, that dawn shall break on the trees and bushes of the park and all the country round about the palace covered with flowers, as in the first months of spring. Go!"

"You shall be obeyed, master," replied the prime minister, bowing himself out backward.

But once outside, consternation seized him, and he let his arms fall helplessly in the long sleeves of his gown.

"It is exile, it is death!" murmured he, "yes death! For I have not the time to fly sufficiently far away, and thunder has fallen upon me from the clear sky full of prosperity!"

His legs bent under him; he caught at the walls to keep from sinking.

"What could he do to avoid disgrace? Nothing, nothing," he told himself, after he had thought over the matter carefully.

For the pleasure of his child his royal master had seriously commanded spring! For a long while he stood without thought, his head hanging like a ball of lead on his miserable breast; then he cast lethargy from him and turned with a resolute air.

"Come, courage, Nai-Dai-Tsin," said he; "a Japanese does not tremble before death. Quick, the sabre first, the stroke in the body; the poniard for the throat!"

He drew out the weapon and prepared for the stroke, but paused reflectively.

Was it really impossible to simulate spring, and thereby, instead of ruin and suicide, conquer eternal fortune? No use to despair too quickly; there was always time to die.

But he couldn't repress a start of terror on seeing how deep the shadow had grown beyond the palace and how rapidly the lights were springing up, like fireflies in the darkness.

"All the park and all the country round about," murmured he; "and only one night!"

Then, on the run, he gained his dwelling, called the council together, and, without giving them time even to seat themselves, imparted to them the extraordinary order transmitted him by the prince.

"An order to be executed under penalty of death before the dawn of the day," said he, recklessly indifferent to the terrified faces of those surrounding him: "the prince's humour is not to be trifled with; he will heed no reason. But listen and fully take in the idea that has come to me, which may be the salvation of all. Go from here and set to work at once in all the country round about, men, women, children, nobles, labourers, merchants, and peasants, with silk, cloth, satin, velvet, paper, or gauze, to work at once, I say, manufacturing artificial flowers.

"If stuff be lacking, let them cut up their clothes, their hangings, their screens, their rugs for the floor—briefly, all that may seem to them necessary or good; then, all these flowers, before daybreak, too, must be tied, nailed, glued, or sewn upon the trees, plants, and bushes, the smallest along the edges of the roads, the tallest farthest away in the fields; all the artists and painters in the neighbourhood following upon their steps to direct the decoration and give finishing touches of the brush wherever needful. I, in person, will watch over and foresee everything; our safety depends upon it."

Less than an hour later, there was not a palace, a house in the city, or a hut in the country where they were not feverishly occupied manufacturing flowers; and whoever had looked from the tower of Kanga palace, shortly after the turn of the night, into the park and neighbourhood, would have believed himself in a sea of lanterns, which surged, and leaped from tree to thicket—an army of fireflies chased by foxes.

But at this hour the illustrious Daimio snored peacefully behind his screen of gold-incrusted iron-wood; and the Incomparable princess, in the softened rays of light sifting through the frail pearl leaves of a swinging *lampadaire*, reclined upon her cushions and sought to compose in her dreams a fitting poem on Spring.

Her women had just finished dressing her next morning when the Princess Fiaki heard under her window the notes of an orchestra and the chant of many voices.

"Ah!" said she, with a wearied gesture, "I remember! My birthday to-day! Why was I born in winter?"

The maids of honour threw wide the window sashes.

"True, mistress," returned they, "but see, the beautiful weather!"

Beautiful indeed, the sky, for once, as if it had been a courtier clothed for the *fête* in a heavenly blue, across which a gay sun rolled of a gold a trifle pale. Languidly the princess advanced to the outer gallery and leant from the balustrade. But then what a cry of surprise and joy!

What was all this she saw before her? Was it possible? Flowers, flowers everywhere! The spring, then, had come!

"What!" said she, turning from side to side and running from end to end of the gallery, "almond-trees red and white, peach blooms, lillies, apple blossoms! What a miracle!"

Moreover, through all these spring roads and pathways gaily dressed throngs were hurrying to pay their

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respects to their prince's daughter; the great *seigneurs* on horseback, the noble dames in bullock carts or the regular *nourimanos*.

Fiaki hastened to descend; the Daimio met her upon the terrace steps and she threw herself into his arms with a cry of "Father! father! thou art in truth a god!"

Then they strolled through the park and gardens to admire this magic spring. Fiaki laughed and danced and clapped her hands like a child, and immediately a great chariot shaped like a pavilion, all aglow with gold stars and drawn by white bullocks, drew up at the terrace steps for the princess and her maids of honour to take a ride through the country. Then the visitors entered their cars and fell in line, and it was one long, continuous, joyous, brilliant, and interminable procession.

The prince led the way, the prime minister beside him, grave and impassable in his triumph. The scene of enchantment was the same along all the roads, the warmth of the sun and the light golden fog that faintly veiled the face of nature rendering still more complete the illusion of spring, richer, more flowery, more generous in all respects than the real spring-time.

"And what a delicious perfume!" cried the happy little princess, every instant thrusting her pretty little head out of the chariot to see the better, "what a delicious perfume floats in the air from all these flowers!"

Delicious indeed! The Daimio himself smelt it—scent fountains and atomizers, in fact, hidden in the harnessing of the beeves, the spray from which mingled itself with the breath of the animals.

Ever and ever so far they went into the country. Wild with delight, Fiaki could not abridge her happiness. Then she wanted to return by another road—was it possible?

A little uneasy, the prince regarded his impassible minister.

"Does the princess desire," demanded he, "to return by the hills or the orchards?"

"The orchards, by all means," the young girl responded: "it is farther and more beautiful."

And by the orchards they returned; as Fiaki had said, more beautiful than all they had seen. Soon the pink blossoms of a plum-tree caught the princess's attention.

"I must have it," she cried, "a branch of that plum-tree to carry with me as a souvenir of this wonderful spectacle."

"The game is up!" moaned the prince to himself, throwing an appealing glance upon his minister.

But the minister had neither paled nor trembled.

"I will do myself the honour of plucking it for you," said he, putting spurs to his horse and returning a moment later with a superbly flowered branch.

No sooner done than the maids of honour wanted a piece, and then all the noble dames, seeing that they were really permitted to pluck the blossoms, leapt from their cars and demanded fragrant souvenirs on their own account.

Really this was too much! The prince paled with anger and was going to order them to move on, but the minister reassured him with an imperceptible shrug; he knew women well—he had foreseen this also, and at a sign to an assistant a cart drove up loaded to the top with dewy blossoms, and all were provided with that which they demanded.

Nai-Dai-Tsin had unhesitatingly pillaged all the conservatories of the palaces, and had men mingling with the crowd with bags full of flowers till the word was given. The prince, who had not divined this simple device, was speechless with amazement.

"Thou art truly a wonderful man," he murmured in the minister's ear, as they re-entered the palace, "and thou hast done far more than I could possibly have hoped; but even in the delight of this wonderful fête, there has been in me a dull disquiet—how shall we ever be able to surpass this spectacle for the coming year?"

Meanwhile as the Daimio tarried to speak to his minister, Fiaki descended from her chariot; at the same time the son of the Prince of Satsouma, who had far to come and who had just arrived at the palace with a brillant escort, advanced to salute her.

A very handsome young man, too, and so brave that in spite of his youth he was already much talked about. Deeply moved at so much beauty, he stood before Fiaki, and she, no less blushing and confused, buried her face in the fragrant blossoms in her hand and could say not a word.

Nai-Dai-Tsin, who seemed to see everything, called the prince's attention to them, and to the mutual mental disturbance that seemed to leave them both tongue-tied.

"When the seventeenth year of your daughter arrives for her, my lord," said he, "give her for husband that handsome prince there, and she will love him more than to-day she loves the spring."

The Daimio's face broadened into a delightful smile and he hurriedly thrust a gold and bronze trinket into the prime minister's hand,

"The key of my treasure-box, Nai-Dai-Tsin," said he; "take it, use what you will, and heed my advice—be not too modest!"

J. Goste.

THE INVADERS.

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BETRAYED.

NIGHT had fallen on the sleeping camp, a windy, rainy night, and not a sound of life broke the stillness save the occasional challenge of a distant sentry as Private Riley, muffled in his great-coat, stood leaning on his rifle at his post. The post was a remote one, far removed from the regimental guard in the X lines, where Riley's regiment was quartered.

The sentry's duty was to guard the mortuary, in which a soldier from a regiment just returned from India lay dead, awaiting his funeral on the morrow. Such a duty as this, on such a night would have tried the nerves of many a good soldier. Private Riley had proved on more than one battlefield that he was no coward, but he was not a good soldier; if the truth must be told, he bore the worst character in the regiment.

He had enlisted some nine years before, had proved a promising young soldier, was promoted and soon became sergeant, but lost his stripes through a drunken escapade.

Foreign service and a small frontier war gave him another chance, and in six months he was sergeant again, for a few weeks only; his besetting sin once more reducing him to the ranks.

From that day things went from bad to worse, and Riley was in constant trouble. His harsh and overbearing manner as a sergeant, had made him many enemies. Some of them, now non-commissioned officers themselves, were not slow to remember old grievances when opportunity arose, which was only too frequently with him.

He was the dog with the bad name, and was shunned by all, with one exception. This exception was young Private Courtney. Courtney was a soldier, born of a long line of fighting ancestors, with that deep rooted love of the service that makes a man a good soldier and nothing else. A happy-go-lucky favourite everywhere, he had failed to pass his examination for a commission. Still determined to persevere, and with the hope of winning it at the point of the bayonet, he had joined the ranks feeling sure of his eventual success.

On joining the regiment he was pleased to recognise in Riley a man whom he had known formerly in his native village.

Cheered by the recognition coming at a time when there was hardly a man on speaking terms with him, Riley's heart softened to the young soldier, and he did a hundred and one things that an old hand only can do to help the recruit in his new surroundings.

A curious friendship sprang up between these two men, which tended greatly to the improvement of Riley, and might have resulted in his complete reformation, had not a tragic event brought it to an abrupt termination.

As he stood leaning on his rifle this particular night his thoughts were on anything but his duty. A trifling incident of the day had ruffled his too easily disturbed temper, and the enforced abstinence while on guard disturbed him. "Hang it!" he muttered, as he brought his rifle to the slope and took a sharp turn up and down his post,

"Here's fourpence; go and get me a pot of beer."

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thinking of the comfortable barrack room. Halting again in his former position, the sound of a footstep called him to attention. It was not the step of a soldier, and in idle curiosity he waited to see who was in this out-of-the-way place at such an hour.

A little boy emerged from the darkness and stumbled against him.

Here was an opportunity not to be thrown away! Seizing the child by the arm, he shouted:

"Hullo, boy, what are you doing here, a-trespassing on Government property?"

The frightened child whimpered out that he was going home.

"Duty's duty," said the soldier, "and it is my duty to shoot you dead!"

"Oh, if you please, sir——" began the boy, but the soldier cut him short.

"Well, I'm a kind-hearted man although I am a soldier, and if I do let you off, you must do something for me."

"I'll do whatever you tell me, sir."

"Do you know the Redan public-house, first turning on the right and straight on?"

"Yes, sir."

"Here's fourpence, go and get me a pot of beer, and mind if you ain't back with it in five minutes, every soldier in camp will be turned out to hunt you down. Off you go. Quick march! double!"

As the boy ran off, glad to escape so easily, the sentry resumed his march. "Another hour," he muttered, as he listened to the sound of a distant clock. "Ah! here comes the youngster with the beer."

"There's many a slip between cup and lip," so Riley found, for as he stretched out his hand for the pot the tramp of soldiers approaching struck his ear. The sergeant with a visiting patrol. Why could they not leave him alone, he had been visited once since being posted.

There was no time for thought. Boy and beer were bundled unceremoniously inside the mortuary, with a hasty caution to keep silent until released, the door was closed, and the sentry challenged the advancing party. The answer to his challenge coming in the well-known and hated voice of the corporal, and the tramp of many feet told the dismayed soldier that it was the relief that was approaching. The night watch had passed quickly. He had mistaken the hour, and in another minute he would be on his way to the guard-room.

The long line of men halted, and as one of them stepped out and stood with rifle at the port facing him, Riley saw by the light of the lantern which the corporal held that it was Courtney who was to relieve him. The complication of the situation flashed through his brain. Courtney might fall into severe disgrace at the outset of his career, or receive a severe shock. He knew well enough that after the manner of soldiers, Courtney's comrades of the guard-room would have done all in their power to try the nerves of the recruit about to stand his first night-guard.

Riley saw by the light of the lantern which the corporal held that it was Courtney who was to relieve him.

As he looked into the face of his only friend, all his better instincts struggled to the surface. He would confess to the breach of discipline, take the well-deserved punishment, and save him.

Mechanically he stammered through the orders to the relieving sentry, but with such hesitation as to call forth a sharp, sarcastic rebuke from the corporal, formerly his victim, now his most vindictive persecutor.

"Anything to report?" growled the corporal.

"No," came the answer, firm and distinct. The change was affected, and the corporal ordered:

"Sentries pass!"

For an instant Riley hesitated before obeying the order in the hope of giving a word or sign of warning to Courtney, but the vigilance of the corporal prevented either. The next moment Riley was marching back to the guard-room, and Courtney was guarding the dead.

Left alone to his dreary duty, Courtney, though a brave youth, gradually became a prey to nervous fear.

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The weird stories told in the guard-room of mysterious things that had happened to lonely sentries would recur, and strive as he might he could not fix his thoughts on other matters. He craved for action, but the only action possible was the short march up and down past the door of the mortuary. In spite of a strong desire to shrink to the further end of his post, bravely he continued his march, but his nervous dread of the unknown increased at every turn.

Was it fancy, or did he hear a noise inside the mortuary?

Fancy, of course; he was a cowardly fool, and he rested at the end of his post. The storm lulled, and his courage returned. For an instant the moon shone clear and unclouded. Throwing the rifle over his shoulder he was starting for another turn, but what was that? A ghastly white face at the window of the mortuary! As he gazed in terror the moon was hidden and an awful darkness followed.

Seized with a desperate longing for a human presence he would have shouted to the nearest sentry, but that was useless, the storm would drown his voice. Shaking in every limb, and half paralysed, he marched resolutely past the door and turned.

The storm was breaking, and by the light of the moon he saw the door of the mortuary slowly open! An overwhelming desire to rush to the guard-room possessed him. Impossible! A soldier must not desert his post; Slowly the door opened, and a white hand grasped the edge of it.

What was the meaning of this? Courtney's blood seemed to freeze in his veins, a dreadful creepy feeling went down his back and his hair seemed as though it would lift his busby from his head. His fingers gripped the butt of his rifle convulsively and seemed to cling to it as though they were parts of a vice rather than a portion of his anatomy that should have been well under the control of his will; his legs shook and appeared to be giving way under him. Could it be that his comrade, lying in the mortuary, was about to appear before him in shadowy out-line, in full uniform, like those phantom soldiers in India about the time of the Mutiny—the men who had been seen digging in the trenches during the night—as related by some of the fellows of his company?

The inarticulate words of the challenge rattled in the sentry's throat.

The door opened still wider.

He made an effort to win back his courage and firmness, and made a step forward with the intention of going resolutely to the door of the mortuary and solving the awful mystery of the white face and the white hand; but he stopped dead at that one step and could go no farther. His tongue clove to the roof of his mouth and his throat was parched, but he felt that he must at least utter the challenge.

The inarticulate words of the challenge rattled in the sentry's throat, as his rifle clattered on the pavement and he fell, with his face to the starlit sky.

* * * * *

An hour later the sergeant with Private Riley and another soldier visited the sentries. No challenge came from No. 6 post as they advanced towards it. The door of the mortuary was open. Private Courtney lay cold and dead on his back, his rifle beside him and his feet to the door.

A. Clark Little.

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A MINING TRANSACTION.

So you feel curious to know how and where I made my little bit of money? No, it wasn't at Klondyke; let those who like go to such a place as that, but, for my part, I think the risk too great and the chance of making money too small.

I didn't join in any "rush," I didn't even go out of my way to find my gold mine; it just came into my way. I believe in seizing your opportunity, and when this chance presented itself I decided to take it, although it was not without risk. I didn't dig for my gold in the ordinary way; it came to me through a little speculation in mining property. This is how it was.

It was in the early nineties and I was out in Western Australia, to which colony I had emigrated because I thought I might pick up a better living than there seemed any prospect of doing at home; and while I was searching for an easy means of getting a livelihood I heard the history of the King's Gold Mine.

This mine was one of three plains that had once belonged to two miners who had reaped no benefit from them; these men had handed over one claim—afterwards known as the King's Gold Mines—to a man out there who had advanced them a small sum of money to enable them to prosecute their operations in the other two claims.

What had become of those miners I never heard, but their claims were useless, and they disappeared.

The third claim was worked for a time under the direction of its second owner, Mr. John Reeks, who found a very small quantity of gold in it and then took advantage of the gold-mining craze to turn it into a company; he sold his own shares in the concern and retired with a nice little fortune, leaving the mine to occupy the attentions of those who had invested in it.

Disappointment followed the floating of this venture; the mine yielded nothing, and as there was no more capital forthcoming to work it, operations were soon suspended and the mines fell into disuse. The shares, which were all held by colonists, became practically worthless and might have been had for the price of a drink.

When I made the acquaintance of the mine there was a little work going on. A certain shrewd gentleman, by name Henry Black, who possessed considerable influence in that part of the colony, had paid a visit to the King's and inspected it; a few days after his first visit he paid a second call in company with an expert; and a little later still he set some men to work and began looking round for shares that might be drifting about unappreciated

He had obtained the permission of the Board of Directors to spend a little of his own money on the mine; those three officials had given their consent with much indifference, as they did not think the game worth the candle, and it was not their money which Mr. Black was spending.

The miners had not been at work many days before they turned up some gold—only a little, but gold all the same. This was kept as quiet as possible, and Black became more persistent in his search for the mining scrip. It was at this point that he met me, and I helped him in his endeavours.

There were 50,000 shares and Black was anxious to get at least 30,000 of these in his own hands. The directors held very few, not more than 5,000 between them, so that left just 25,000 for Black to get hold of in order to have control of the property, for the directors were all on his side. We had to hunt about for some days in the neighbourhood to find the men who owned shares, but at last we raked up the number we wanted and then we stopped. The balance did not trouble Black, as he would have a majority if he could succeed in obtaining the transfer of the shares from the holders he had approached. Of the remaining 20,000, about half were owned by people in the immediate neighbourhood—by which I mean within fifty miles or so —and the other half belonged to people who lived at either some distance or in other colonies.

Things were not done out there exactly the same as they would be at home. Rumours of what was going on had reached the ears of the "balance," as we called the outstanding shareholders, and they began to get suspicious; it occurred to them that it might not be to their interest that these transfers should take place, although they could not have explained the reason for their suspicions, and they resolved to prevent the transfers being effected. The fact that if the directors agreed to the registration the matter was in order and they had no right to interfere did not appeal to them in the least; they meant to stop the proceedings if they could.

The secretary and I went to the several shareholders, paid them the price of the purchase and got their signatures. As Black was giving them five shillings a share and most of the sellers had picked up the scrip for sixpence or less, they were well satisfied. The next thing was to lodge the deeds at the registered office of the company, which was close to the mine, and hold a

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Board meeting to pass them. Black was to be present and affix his signature just previous to the meeting; the secretary had prepared the new certificate in readiness.

And that was where the trouble came in.

The dissentients determined to prevent the meeting, but Black and the directors got wind of this intention and resolved to be first.

Instead of waiting for the appointed day, which was forty-eight hours off, they decided to go without further delay to the King's Gold Mine and settle the business.

They all lived at a town fifty miles distant from the mine, so Black chartered a special train that very evening and made arrangements with the Board and the secretary to travel by that special at nine o'clock.

It was just before nine when the six of us reached the railway station where the engine and a special carriage were waiting for us. We entered the carriage —all except Black, who was standing on the platform talking with the station-master—and were chatting gaily, when our talk was interrupted by a hubbub on the platform. Putting my head out of the door I saw two men in altercation with Black and the station-master.

"You send that train off at your own risk," vociferated the foremost of the new-comers.

"Of course I do," answered the official calmly. "That's what I'm here for."

"These men must not be taken to Allwell," shouted the second man angrily. "They are going to commit——"

"That's enough of it!" cried Black. "We have chartered this train and can do as we like."

Then followed some violent talking, threatening and gesticulating, and Black slipped away from them and entered the carriage, leaving the two objectors to threaten the station-master, the engine-driver and the stoker.

In a few words he explained the situation. Others were coming to assist the two ringleaders, he said, and our best plan was to get out of the carriage and pretend to go off, but all the while we should make our way down the line for about half a mile where the "special" would pick us up. The engine-driver and station master would pretend that the engine was going to put the carriage in the siding and then go to the shed, so as to throw our enemies off their guard, but once clear of the station the train would run along the line, pick us up and dash off to Allwell.

We must slip out of the carriage on the off-side and he would give the tip to the driver; when the objectors found that the carriage was empty and that the train was, apparently, not to be made use of, they would conclude that they had scored.

Ten minutes later we were more than half-a-mile down the line, waiting for the train to come along. In the meantime the dissentients, reinforced by several others, had discovered that we had decamped and had allowed the engine and carriage to move slowly from the platform, the driver made the whistle shriek as if in fiendish exultation and sent the engine rattling over the metals.

We saw it coming along and gave a great yell for the double purpose of expressing our feelings and telling the driver where we were; and in a few seconds we were once more seated in the carriage and rushing along towards Allwell.

But we soon found that we were not quite out of the wood. About ten miles down the line we had to pass through a station named Boolong, and as we rattled through it we saw an engine moving slowly from a siding on to the main track.

"Whew!" whistled Black. "Do you see what they've done? They have stationed someone here to intercept us if we got out from Relton, and on discovering that they had been tricked they wired to this place to have us stopped. But we have got past just in time and now we have the line to ourselves."

The next hour was the most exciting I have ever been through. Acting on Black's instructions, I opened the carriage door and clambered to the engine, where I told the driver that he must put on all the speed he could in order to out-distance the pursuing engine and get us to Allwell in time to pass the transfers before the enemy arrived. The directors were saying hard things about themselves for not having the seal of the company and certain books with them instead of allowing them to remain at the office, as in that case they could have passed the transfers in Relton or in the carriage.

In a few seconds we were flying along the metals with the other engine tearing after us. I don't think either of us ever stopped to consider what would be the result if our engine suddenly broke down; and what the pursuers thought of doing when they got near enough to us was also, most probably, left out of calculation. They could hardly leap off their engine and intercept us, and if they ran into us and smashed us up, the chances were very much in favour of their suffering to the same extent as ourselves.

Away we went in the dark night, the sparks flying from both engines and the reddish smoke resembling the fiery breath of some huge monster. We kept well ahead for about four miles, and then I noticed that the pursuing engine was drawing nearer. Presently we jolted over some points, and on looking backward, half a minute later I observed that the adversary was a little to our right instead of directly behind us. I was puzzled for a moment to account for this and then the explanation came like a flash; the engine was on the other line and would endeavour to overtake us in that way.

I urged the driver to get up all the speed he could, telling him what had occurred. "They can't very well stop us even in that manner," I added, "but if they reach the destination at the same time as ourselves, that will upset our plans, as they will prevent us from getting to the office."

"They can stop us if they only get a yard start," returned the driver grimly. "There is about thirty miles of this track and then it goes off to a single line before we get to Allwell. It's a race now to see who can get to the single line first."

I emitted a long whistle; now I understood the manœuvre.

And the worst of it was that our pursuers appeared to be gaining on us. There was no need to say anything to our driver; professional pride as well as the prospect of earning a round sum of money made him do his utmost. I could only endeavour to keep calm and watch the race—by no means an easy task however.

Nearer and nearer the pursuing engine came, and at the end of the five miles we were running almost level. Not a word was spoken between the two parties; I doubt whether even so much as an order to the driver was uttered on either side; with set faces we watched the course of the race and waited anxiously for the result.

Thus we flew along side by side in the darkness for several minutes, neither engine gaining any great advantage over the other. Sometimes our adversary was a little in advance and at others our iron steed had

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the lead, but there was no real gain, mile after mile was covered and at last I went to our driver and asked him if we were not now very close to the single line.

"Less than five miles," he said quietly. "What is it to be? Are we to go on and chance it? We are on the straight, but they have to make a little curve."

It was a critical thing to decide. I hardly cared to pronounce the words that might mean the death warrant of several people, for if we collided at the junction of the two lines of metals there was very little probability that any of us would escape. The responsibility of the decision was taken from me by Black, who at that moment shouted out of the window; I only caught the concluding words, but they were sufficient.

"——get on the single line first!"

What a strange power some men have over others. The very fact that he had spoken seemed to settle the matter at once; it never occurred to me, at any rate, to question the result and I believe it was the same with our driver. We just went as hard as we could for that single line.

One mile; two, three! Both engines were running level and, as it appeared to certain destruction. Were the dissentients as determined as ourselves? Another mile, and then I found that we had the lead and were keeping it. We were going no faster than before, for the simple reason that we were at top speed, so I concluded that the others had faltered and were slackening in order to avoid a collision. And then we dashed on to the single line.

We had won the race so far, but would there be time for us to get to the office and settle the little affair on hand? Our enemies, after all, could reach Allwell practically at the same time as ourselves. Our single line was not very straight, so that unless the pursuing engine kept close behind us we could not see it. I kept constantly on the watch for it to appear just behind us round the bends, but it did not come into view and we reached Allwell without catching another glimpse of it.

I question whether a party of non-professionals ever sprinted along a country road at the same rate as we did after we left the train. We reached the office and the director at once proceeded to transact business. We had finished and were on our way back to the station, where there was a house in which we could pass the night, when we met our pursuers.

Then we learnt that their engine which had slackened in order to take the points, had somehow fouled them; the engine had run off the metals, but had come to no great harm, the chief result to our adversaries being the loss of time, which enabled us to carry out our plan.

After all, they benefited in the same proportion as Black himself, for their shares went up in value and they made a fine thing out of them. If they had succeeded in thwarting Black, there is every reason to believe that the shares of the King's Gold Mine would still be worth about sixpence each. But I suppose they thought that he would make a heap of money and they would get nothing.

About my own little bit? Well, I was of considerable assistance to Black, and he is a man who thoroughly appreciates that kind of thing. I think that explains it.

G. Day.

£250 * *

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Briton or Boer?

By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

INTRODUCTION.

For years past Britain and the Transvaal have been spoiling for a fight, and it was left to that well-known author, Mr. George Griffith, to write this strong and exciting serial nearly four years ago graphically describing a huge war between the two countries.

The story, coming so soon after the Jameson Raid, was read with unusual interest.

Now that Briton and Boer are in deadly conflict it will be interesting to read the story, and see how far the imagination of the author has actually come true.

SUMMARY OF OPENING CHAPTERS.

Chapter I.—The scene opens on the Rand. It is the eve of Amajuba day, and a State ball is being given. To this comes Prince Paul Regna, a Polish nobleman, and his daughter, Princess Vavara. They are introduced to Dr. Leyds.

Chapter II.—Dr. Leyds returns to Pretoria to attend a midnight consultation at the Government buildings. The Prince's rooms are in the Grand Hotel opposite. By tapping the wires, which cross the street at this point, the Prince and his daughter overhear all that goes on, and telegraph the result by secret code to Europe.

Chapters III. and IV.—Amajuba day dawns. The Secretary accompanies the Prince and Princess to Krugersdorp, where, from the base of the Monument of Independence, the President makes a great proclamation. The Convention of London is abrogated, the absolute independence of the South African Republic is declared; the President unfurls a Union Jack and rends it to pieces. So the storm bursts!

Chapters V. and VI.—On the following day Major-General Carrington learns at Buluwayo that all the wires have been cut between Rhodesia and the south and east. He concludes that this is due to Boer hostility, and prepares to meet it. Meanwhile a powerful British squadron appears unexpectedly in Delagoa Bay, and Lieutenant Ferris is sent ashore to take possession of the telegraph station.

CHAPTER VII.

Forcing the Lock.

The smoke-cloud towards Inyack Island had now resolved itself into several distinct streams of smoke which proceeded respectively from the funnels of Her Majesty's battleships *Victorious*, *Magnificent*, and *Majestic*, the cruisers *Terrible*, *Powerful*, *Edgar*, *Endymion*, and *Grafton*, and the torpedo-destroyers *Ardent*, *Boxer*, *Bruiser*, *Daring*, *Ferret*, and *Foam*.

They were coming up at the full speed of the battleships, seventeen knots, or nearly twenty statute miles, which was better than that of the Russians by a good couple of knots.

When they were about ten miles from the land the two great cruisers *Powerful* and *Terrible* put on their full speed of twenty-two knots, closely followed by the *Edgar*, *Endymion*, and *Grafton* doing a good twenty, with the obvious intention of heading off the Russians which lay in the seven-fathom water outside the mouth of the harbour.

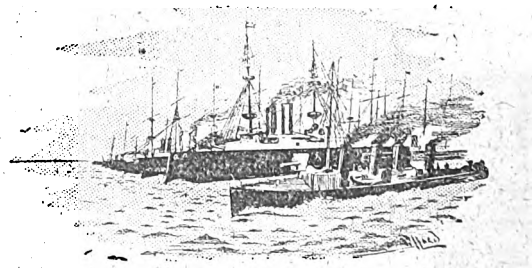
The three battleships, attended by the destroyers, followed the cruisers in column of line abreast about half-a-mile astern.

Not many minutes now elapsed before his glasses showed the Russian Admiral how formidable a foe he had to contend with. A single glance was enough to convince him that he was completely cut off from the sea, and must either fight at practically hopeless odds or surrender.

How he had been caught in such a trap was utterly beyond his comprehension. His orders had told him to pay a friendly visit to Cape Town and coal there. This done, he was to weigh anchor, ostensibly with the object of proceeding to the China Seas, steam straight to the latitude of Delagoa Bay, and lie with banked fires thirty miles to the eastward of Inyack Island, there to await orders from the land. These orders he had received through the medium of the yacht which the solitary watcher on Reuben Point had seen steam out to sea twenty-four hours before. On receipt of these he had steamed into the Bay.

His arrival, moreover, had been strictly timed to anticipate by some six hours the arrival of the German squadron consisting of the ironclads, *Kaiser* and *Deutchland*, the cruisers *Geier*, *See Adler*, and *Condor*, and six first and second-class torpedo boats, which Mr. Secretary Leyds had confidently expected to be in possession of the "keyhole of Africa" on the morning of the 17th December.

But, whatever the reasons of these extraordinary happenings, there could not be the slightest doubt as to the purpose of the British squadron. The two lines of cruisers and battleships took up their position across the ten-



fathom channel to the north of Elephant Island, thus completely barring the way to all vessels of such draft as the Russians. Then one of the destroyers, the *Bruiser*, left the side of the *Majestic*, flying a white flag, and came tearing through the smooth water at some twenty knots an hour towards the *Navarin*.

She ran alongside the Russian flagship, and the lieutenant in command delivered a note from the British Admiral stating that he accepted the shots fired at the *Thrasher* as an act of war and declaration of hostilities, and calling upon the Russian Admiral, in the interests of humanity, to surrender forthwith to a force which an appended list of the British warships would prove to be of overwhelming strength.

The note concluded with the brief but startling state-

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ment that Delagoa Bay and the surrounding territory had been purchased by Great Britain from Portugal, and that, therefore, the Russian squadron was in British waters without either invitation or permission.

Politely worded as it was, it was by no means a pleasant message to receive. Vice-Admiral Tcherkov glanced from under his frowning brows at the formidable list, and in that glance recognised the inevitable. In number of ships, speed, and gunpowder, he was hopelessly at a disadvantage.

Altogether he was between the horns of an exceedingly awkward dilemma. To fight meant almost certain destruction; to surrender without a fight meant not only disgrace but probably also court-martial and death. Flight was absolutely out of the question, for his ships were completely hemmed in by the British squadron, which entirely commanded the only practicable channel between the perils of the Lech Reef and the Cockburn Shoals.

As most men in such a position would have done, he tried to temporise. He assured the lieutenant of the *Bruiser* that he had no intention of sinking the *Thrasher*, as he could easily have done had he desired to do so. That he had suspected a sinister motive in what he thought to be the unwarrantable landing of the British bluejackets, and therefore thought he had a right to stop the destroyer by force after she had disregarded his signal. Further, that he was not aware that his country was in a state of war with Great Britain, and that therefore he claimed an armistice of twelve hours to enable him to communicate with his Government by telegraph.

The reasoning was plausible enough, seeing that it had to be formulated on the spur of the moment, but it went only a very short way with Lieutenant Cardigan of the *Bruiser*, for he listened to it with a just perceptible smile on his clean shaven lip, and answered it politely and uncompromisingly by saying:

"My instructions, sir, are to take back your answer 'Yes,' or 'No.' I have no power to make terms or to listen to proposals. If I return without an answer the squadron will advance, and fire will be opened immediately."

Very important issues are sometimes decided by very trifling causes, and it was thus what was afterwards known as the Battle of Delagoa Bay came to be fought. There was something exceedingly unpleasant in the quiet tones of the young lieutenant, a suggestion of absolute and unquestioned superiority which set the hot semi-Tartar blood of Admiral Tcherkov on fire, and scattered whatever prudent considerations might have been forming in his mind to the winds.

His sallow face flushed a muddy red, and his bristly whiskers and moustache seemed to stiffen out with anger. He stamped his foot on the deck, and said in a harsh and somewhat husky voice:

"The servants of my master are not accustomed to be bullied in that fashion, sir. Go back and tell your admiral that I shall obey my orders at any cost. They are to remain here until the arrival of another squadron, which is not many hours behind you, and here I shall remain either till that squadron arrives or the last of my ships is sunk.

"Tell him, too, if he does not already know it, that the fight will not be so unequal as he seems to hope for. There may be no escape for us, but it may be that there will be none for you either if our friends find you here in the condition in which I hope we shall leave you. That is my answer. Good-morning, sir."

With that Admiral Tcherkov abruptly turned his back on the lieutenant of the *Bruiser* and walked aft. That officer smiled gravely, yet not sadly—such a smile as a man might permit himself when holding four aces at poker. He took a rapid but comprehensive glance over the decks of the *Navarin*, touched his cap to the officer in charge of the gangway, and walked stiffly and deliberately down the ladder.

The *Bruiser* sped away towards the British line, which was now about three miles from the Russian. Almost at the same moment the *Sokol*, which had been lying on the other side of the *Navarin*, left her side and headed away at full speed to the south-eastward with the obvious intention of rounding the southern extremity of Inyack Island, slipping through the shallow water which covered the narrow channel between the island and the peninsula, and so getting to sea.

She was the fastest craft in the Russian navy, running a good thirty knots an hour. Once outside she would most likely trust to her heels for a successful dash up the Mozambique Channel to the nearest French telegraph station in Madagascar, and there give information of the doings of the British squadron. Possibly, too, she might fall in with a powerful French squadron which Admiral Tcherkov would have been very glad to believe actually in the proximity to Delagoa Bay that he had alleged it to be in.

Although the *Bruiser* kept on her way towards the *Majestic* this incident by no means passed unnoticed. The *Thrasher* had rejoined the squadron, and had taken up her station between the *Majestic* and the *Victorious*. Instantly her number fluttered from the signal-yard of the flagship with a string of variegated bunting below it.

Lieutenant Ferris, still standing on the platform of the telegraph house with his glasses fastened to his eyes, shut his teeth with a snap and muttered a hardly printable expression through them as he saw the signal which he had no need to be able to read. His instinct told him that it read:

"Chase *Sokol*. Capture or sink."

The next moment the *Thrasher* backed out from between the big battleships, stopped and turned, as it were, on her heel, till her nose pointed due south. Then, as if a powerful spring had been released behind her, she shot away towards the southern point of the island to, if possible, cut the *Sokol* off before she could double it and make for the passage.

According to the etiquette of civilised warfare the now inevitable battle could not begin until the *Bruiser* had delivered her message to the *Majestic*, and hauled down her white flag, so the two squadrons continued to approach each other with guns loaded and pointed until the black, wicked-looking little craft, as though exulting in her superior speed, took a wide sweep round the three battleships and ran in under the quarter of the *Majestic* with as much ease as though she had been laying at anchor instead of steaming her full seventeen knots through the water.

When Admiral Taylor Dale received the reckless defiance of the Russian Admiral, and heard the news of the threatened approach of the hypothetical friendly squadron, he shook his head with the gesture of a man who had just heard that another had decided to commit suicide.

There was, however, no question in his mind as to the task which lay before him, and if there had been any it would have been instantly removed by the sight of the red ensign flying from the flagstaff of the telegraph station, for that was the pre-arranged signal which told him that Lieutenant Ferris had sent to the Cape the news of the arrival of the squadron and the finding of the enemy, and had received the expected order to fight.

The importance of getting in the first blow was never so great as it is in modern naval warfare, and of this fact the

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British Admiral was fully aware. The three pairs of twelve-inch, fifty-ton guns in the forward barbettes of the *Majestic*, *Magnificent*, and *Victorious*, were already trained on to the *Navarin*. In point of range and striking power these guns are generally considered to be the most effective weapons afloat, and on this the first occasion on which they had been used in deadly earnest, they amply justified their reputation.

At two thousand yards they all spoke together, and the six huge shells found their mark on the devoted *Navarin* almost at the same instant.

The effect was as marvellous as it was frightful. The Russian flagship was for the moment enveloped in a cloud of mingled smoke and flame. A minute before she had been spick and span and perfect in every detail. A minute after she was a shattered wreck, rent and battered out of all recognition.

Almost at the same moment the cruisers, which had been swiftly closing in, opened fire with their 9·2in. guns at 3,000 yards range on the *Rurick* and the *Rossia*, which replied with their 8in. guns from the forward sponsons. The *Powerful* and *Terrible* devoted their attention to the *Rossia*, while the *Edgar* and *Endymion* tackled the *Rurick*.

The Russian cruisers were slower in speed and weaker in armament than the British, but they were armoured and their opponents were not. The British, therefore, taking advantage of their superior speed, kept away and pounded the Russians with their big guns, waiting until the battleships had disposed of the *Navarin* and the *Gangout*, after which there would naturally be nothing left for the Russian cruisers but the choice between sinking and surrender.

But that one terrible discharge from the big guns of the *Majestic*, *Magnificent*, and *Victorious* had not only begun the fight; it had, in fact, decided it. The commander of the *Gangout*, though every whit as brave a man as his admiral, was considerably more prudent, and when he saw his consort practically put out of action before she had fired a shot, he clearly recognised that to go on was merely to court certain destruction. His own guns were trained on the *Majestic*, and his finger was on the electric button, ready to transmit the spark which would have fired them, when to his horror he saw the *Navarin* lurch heavily to port, and begin to settle by the stern.

The two shells of the *Victorious* had happened to strike close together under her quarter, a few feet aft of the end of her armoured belt. They had penetrated and burst inside her inner skin, and one of the fragments had exploded a torpedo just as it was being placed in one of the after tubes.

No fabric made by human hands could have withstood the frightful energy of the combined explosions. A huge rent was torn in her quarter, her port screw-shaft was broken, and the torpedo-room was flooded in an instant.

The commander of the *Gangout* saw at a glance that she was doomed, and that the fight was now more hopeless than ever. A few brief moments of bitter reflection convinced him that there was only one course to be taken. He saw the *Majestic* heading straight for his crippled consort, pouring in a ceaseless storm of shot from her forward six-inch quick-firers, and evidently meaning to ram unless the Russian flagship struck. His own ship, too, was getting badly mauled under the combined fire of the *Victorious* and the *Majestic*, while she herself had not fired a shot.

All this had taken place during the few moments that he remained undecided whether to fight or strike. His indecision was, however, quickly ended by the sight of the *Navarin's* flag fluttering down in token of surrender. A moment or two more and the ram of the *Majestic* would have sent her to the bottom. He struck his own flag at once, and surrendered with the unfired charges still in his guns, and within fifteen minutes of the firing of the first shot.

The *Rurick* struck to the *Endymion* and the *Edgar* a few minutes later, hopelessly outmatched in speed and weight of metal. The *Rossia*, with her triple engines driving her three propellers at their utmost speed, made a desperate effort to pass between the *Terrible* and the *Grafton* and gain the open sea, but, though she was making nearly twenty knots, she was still one knot slower than the *Grafton* and three knots slower than the *Terrible*, and a very few minutes sufficed to convince her captain that there could be only one end to such a race.

There were the big cruisers in front of him, and the huge 15,000 ton battleships behind him. If he had possessed the twenty-two knots of the *Powerful* or the *Terrible* he might have got away, but the *Rossia's* best was only a fraction over nineteen knots. It was as impossible for him to run away as it was to fight, so down came his flag, too, and within half-an-hour of the firing of the first shot, the *Sokol* was the only craft of the Russian squadron that was not in possession of Admiral Taylor Dale.

CHAPTER VIII.

An Important Capture.

In the comparatively smooth water of the Bay the *Sokol* had an advantage of nearly half a knot over the *Thrasher*, and a few minutes run sufficed to convince Lieutenant Frank Stevens, who was commanding the British boat, *vice* Lieutenant Ferris, that, although the Russian had a little farther to go, he would get to the opening first. The boilers of both boats were throbbing under every ounce of steam that they would stand, and their thin steel sides seemed to palpitate like the flanks of a racing horse, and the flames that roared up through their funnels were palely visible even in the bright sunlight of the tropical morning.

The practicable channel even for boats like these, drawing under six feet of water, between the island and the peninsula was so narrow that the boat which reached it second would have to go through almost dead astern of the first, and this was a very serious matter.

The speed of the new type of destroyer is so great that the bow torpedo-tube has been abolished, simply because the torpedo cannot be fired ahead unless the boat slows to do it, since at full speed the boat would overtake the torpedo and blow herself up with it. Hence it will be plain that if the *Thrasher* entered the channel astern of the *Sokol* she would stand a chance of being torpedoed without being able to reply.

Lieutenant Stevens clearly foresaw this, and decided, as he put it to his engineer, to get there first or "bust," both

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He begun to implore Stevens to save his life, and let him go on shore as soon as possible.

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metaphorically and literally. The engineer nodded—there didn't seem time to say anything—and the stokers, if possible, worked harder than ever; but those on the *Sokol* were doing the same thing, and the two boats raced absolutely neck and neck for the narrow opening.

Unhappily, however, the *Sokol*, as will be seen from the sketch-map (published in last week's issue) had an almost straight course to steer, while the *Thrasher* had to make a turn to avoid the shoal to the south of the island, one touch on which would have ended the race and probably her own career. This, do what he would, made a difference of about a length to Lieutenant Stevens, and the Russian craft slipped in first.

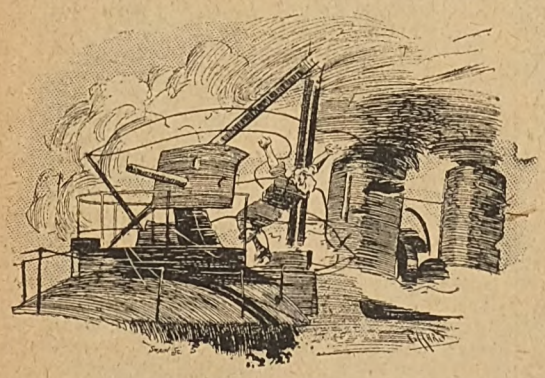
He himself was steering in the conning-tower, and as the two boats were only a couple of hundred feet apart, and running almost exactly the same speed, he could see the slightest movement on the *Sokol's* deck as distinctly as though he had been standing on it. He saw the muzzle of one of the six-pounder quick firers which she carried aft sink slightly, and recognised the fact that the stream of shells, which, in another moment or so, would be pouring from its steel throat would rip the *Thrasher* open almost from stem to stern. There was only one thing to be done, and that at once.

"Ready with the twelve-pounder. Fire!" he shouted. "And keep it up."

The English gunner was just a moment or so quicker with his eyes and hands than the Russian, and so the English shell got home first. It hit the shield of the Russian gun, and smashed it out of shape. Almost at the same instant that it burst the Russian gunner fired, but that moment or two had been all sufficient. The *Sokol* dipped her stern ever so little on a swell that was coming in from the sea. The gunner had no time to correct his aim before he saw the flash from the English gun, and his first and only shell plunged into the water about a foot wide of the *Thrasher's* bow. The next instant he was a dead man and his gun disabled.

"Go for his funnels, Thwaites. You've got them in a dead straight line now. Ah, I thought so! Phew! that was a narrow squeak! Well done, Thwaites, that's stopped her."

Three things had happened almost simultaneously as he was speaking. A torpedo had leapt from the *Sokol's* after-tube into the water dead ahead of the *Thrasher*, Lieutenant



Stevens had ported his helm ever so little, and, as he put it afterwards, just squeezed in between shoal and Sheol—of which latter the torpedo would have formed a capable if transient representation if it had struck the *Thrasher's* bow instead of scraping along her side—and a couple of fast succeeding shells had torn two lines of jagged rents through the four funnels of the Russian boat.

As he spoke he took one hand off the wheel and sent a signal for half-speed to the engine-room. The *Thrasher* slowed down just in time to avoid running her bow into the *Sokol's* stern, but as she came up she received the fire of her two remaining six-pounders, which ripped her deck up in several places and injured her forward funnel rather badly.

But as she was able to bring three of her six-pounders, as well as her twelve-pounder, to reply to these, the argument was not of very long duration. The shells fired at such close quarters drilled clean holes wherever they struck, and after a few minutes' fire the *Sokol* was riddled and rent by scores of holes and gashes in her decks and sides, and was practically in a sinking condition.

The *Thrasher's* last word was a twelve-pound shell, which hit a torpedo that the Russian lieutenant was desperately trying to launch in a last effort to destroy his adversary, and very possibly himself, seeing how close the two craft were. A frightful explosion followed, stunning for the moment every man on board the *Thrasher*, hurling those who were standing on her decks prostrate, and flinging two of them into the sea.

As for the *Sokol*, her after-part seemed to shrivel up as far as the funnels, a great cloud of steam rushed out of the huge ragged rents in the portion which remained, and when Lieutenant Stevens came to himself, he was just in time to stop the *Thrasher* from running into the wreck which lay across the narrow channel in about seven feet of water.

"What a pity!" he said to himself. "I should like to have taken her back to the Bay at the end of a hawser. By Jove! that shook us up pretty well here. A few yards nearer, and we should all have gone to glory together. Poor old Ferris! Won't he be mad when I tell him what he's missed. I wonder if there's anybody alive on board her? We seem to have suffered pretty badly, too."

This was the fact. Poor Gunner Thwaites and his two assistants were lying terribly mangled beside the gun they had used so well; nearly a score of others were more or less badly wounded by the close and rapid shell-fire; and the two men who had been flung senseless overboard had been drowned. The boat was badly knocked about, but fortunately chiefly as to her deck and upper works. Her engines were untouched, and none of the holes or rents in her sides were near the water line.

Lieutenant Stevens had the dinghy lowered, and made a careful personal search of the wreck. Only about a dozen or so of her crew remained alive, and every one of these was either scalded, or badly wounded, or both, with the exception of a man in civilian clothes, who with white face and shaking limbs crawled up out of the fore peak where he had evidently been hiding during the brief running fight, in answer to his repeated hail of inquiry for any more who might be alive on board the wreck.

He scrambled crab fashion along the steeply-tilted deck, and began to implore Stevens to save his life, and let him go on shore as soon as possible as he had most important business to transact. He had evidently been terribly frightened, and, seeing this, the Lieutenant said to him kindly:

"Your life is in no danger, sir. We English don't murder our prisoners, you know; but going ashore is another matter. I'm afraid you'll have to come with me aboard the flagship and get the Admiral's permission first. By-the-way, it's curious you should have important business on shore and yet be in such a tremendous hurry to get away from it, as you were just now. I expect the Admiral will want to know what you, as a civilian, had to do on board a torpedo-boat destroyer, trying to run the gauntlet. Oblige me by getting into the boat."

While he was speaking the Lieutenant's suspicions had been growing. The man spoke English perfectly, but was evidently a Russian—in fact, he spoke it as few foreigners save a Russian could have done—and his eager request to be allowed to go on shore a few minutes after he had been doing his best to escape by sea seemed as suspicious, on

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second thoughts, as it had sounded ludicrous in the first instance.

It was quite possible that the man was an agent of the Russian Government, and that the *Sokol* had been especially dispatched to get him out of the way. If this was the case, it was on the cards that he might have papers of importance in his possession. Lieutenant Frank Stevens, though a thoroughly practical sailor and most promising young officer, had a spice of romance in his nature, and the idea of making a capture which might result in exposing some of the secret machinations of the wilest enemy England had ever had was by no means unpleasing to him.

He gave the prisoner in charge of a quartermaster with instructions to take him to his own cabin. He then told a couple of his men to go down into the fore-peak and make a careful search. As soon as the prisoner heard this an exclamation in Russian, that sounded very like an oath, broke from his lips, and his face, which had begun to regain its colour, turned white again.

"There is nothing there, sir, I assure you," he said to the Lieutenant with needless emphasis. "Nothing but my own private property, which I presume honourable enemies such as you will hold sacred. I am not a combatant, I am a private individual. I was only given a passage on the *Sokol* by the Admiral's favour."

"Where to?" said the Lieutenant abruptly, looking him straight in the eyes.

"To—to—well, to the nearest friendly port at which I could be landed from whence I could go about my business—my own business, of course."

"I'm afraid Mr.—Mr.—by-the-way we have not introduced ourselves yet. I am Lieutenant Stevens, second in command of Her Majesty's ship *Thra her*. May I ask your name?"

The Lieutenant spoke very politely but with just a touch of irony in his tone.

"My name is—Peter Spiridoff, sir, at your service," the prisoner replied with just the slightest perceptible pause after the "is." "I regret that my passport and personal papers were in a portmanteau in a cabin at that end of the vessel which was destroyed by the explosion. *Ach douraki!*"

As it happened Lieutenant Stevens knew just enough Russian to know that this last word was the equivalent of the English monosyllable "fool," preceded by a familiar but unprintable adjective, and for the moment he so far forgot his manners as to laugh outright at his prisoners' discomfiture which was obviously caused by the reappearance of the two men who had been sent to search.

One of them carried a yellow leather dispatch case, on the side of which were boldly painted in black the initials "M.O." The Lieutenant took it from the sailor and looked at it. He noted that it was heavily weighted like a ship's private signal book—probably for the same purpose, to be sunk in case of need.

"Ah, Mr. Peter Spiridoff," he said pleasantly to his prisoner, "this is evidently not yours then. I suppose it belonged to one of the poor fellows who will have no further use for it; possibly you were taking care of it for him in your place of safety. Well, there can be no harm in my taking charge of it at any rate. Now we'd better be getting back on board. After you, Mr. Spiridoff."

Mr. Michael Ostroff had by this time quite recovered from the physical terror which had made him commit in the last few minutes more mistakes than he had made in all the forty odd years of his life before, and in its place he became suddenly possessed by a paroxysm of rage. He had forgotten to destroy or effectively conceal the priceless papers which his dispatch case contained. He had lied about the case itself, and given a false name which prevented him even claiming it.

There was just one chance of redeeming his terrible error. He made a sudden dash at the Lieutenant, tore the case from his hands, and was in the act of flinging it into the sea, when one of the bluejackets grabbed him by the arm and gave it a twist which sent him to his knees, while the other deftly caught the case as it left his hand.

Within five minutes he was securely handcuffed in Lieutenant Stevens' cabin, "foaming at the mouth in double Dutch," as Seaman-Gunner Tom Smith afterwards put it in the forecastle.

The survivors of the *Sokol's* crew were carefully taken on board the *Thrasher*, and then she backed out of the narrow channel, and ran back to the squadron at little more than half the speed she had made during the chase. She was met by the *Boxer*, *Bruiser*, and the *Ardent*, which had been sent to learn the cause of the explosion, which had taken place out of sight of the warships behind the island, and escorted in triumph back to the side of the *Majestic*.

Lieutenant Stevens at once went on board with his prisoner and the dispatch case, and made his report to the Admiral. The Admiral thanked him warmly, ending up with the significant hint at the possible command of the boat that would replace the *Thrasher* while she was undergoing repairs. Then he took possession of the despatch case and sent its owner to the guard-room between two marines.

He opened the case alone in his private room, and for nearly an hour the sentry outside the locked door acted on his express orders, and turned away all applicants for admission, no matter what their rank and or business. He came out looking a good five years older than when he had gone in. He had the look, too, of a man upon whose shoulders the weight of an unexpected and tremendous responsibility had suddenly fallen.

He asked the first midshipman he met on deck where the Flag-Captain was. The middy saluted, and told him he was on the bridge. This the Admiral might have seen for himself at a glance, but, as the Eastern saying has it, "his eyes were turned inward" at the time. He looked up and went straight to the bridge, taking no notice of anyone he passed.

"Barrow," he said, "I've learnt some very grave news. Let all the Russian prisoners be placed as rapidly as possible on board the merchant ships in the bay. Every English sailor, seaman, officer, engineer, or stoker, must, if possible, be got to volunteer for the fleet before midday. All the refitting that can be done at sea must be pushed on as rapidly as possible; but, first of all, signal for all the flag-captains and senior commanders of the squadron to meet in my room in a quarter of an hour."

(To be continued.)

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT THE WAR.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of Edgar Jepson's "Keepers of the People," to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source must be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. R. A. H. Goodyear, of Tune Street, Barnsley, Yorks. Attempts for this week's prize should deal with WAR ANECDOTES and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, March 12th. Post-cards only, please.

The Boers were Dwindling.

"WILLIAMS is a real good fellow at heart, but his belief in himself is abnormal," said a clerk in a big Yorkshire office.

"Being a First-class Reserve man, he was called to the front early, and bragged so much about what he meant doing to the Boers that we all turned pretty sick, and had hard work to keep from kicking him.

"However, we gave him a loyal send off, and waited to hear what he would say about the actual fighting. His first letter came to hand yesterday, and this is all it contained:

"'Dear Pal,—Tell the chaps I shall soon be at my desk again. I'm in fine form, and the Boers are dwindling fast. There'll be nothing left of them in a week if my regiment backs me up.'"

R. A. H. G.

Charity Rewarded.

Two military chaplains, on their way home on a dark night, came upon a soldier lying in the gutter, helplessly intoxicated.

By mutual consent they agreed to see the man home, so they extricated him from the gutter, and, finding out his barracks, walked him off to his room in an apparently affectionate manner.

On arriving at the door, the good-natured clergymen hesitated, but, not desiring to do things by halves, one of them boldly lifted the latch and walked in.

The man, who had somewhat recovered, thanked his benefactors, then, turning towards his comrades in a dreamy sort of way, and jerking his thumb towards the chaplains, he exclaimed:

"My chums of the Rose and Crown!"

J. E.

Didn't Obey Orders.

SERGEANT MALONEY was drilling a squad of recruits.

"When I give the order 'Right legs up' every one of ye put the right leg up together, not one man after the other.

"Right legs up."

One of the recruits by mistake put his left leg up at the command.

Sergeant Maloney retires to the end of the line to inspect them.

In a moment the sergeant roared out with rage:

"What blithering spalpeen is it that's put both legs up?"

E. W. D.

International Disaster.

A GENTLEMAN in Natal invited some friends to dinner, and, as the coloured servant entered the room, he accidentally dropped a platter which held a turkey.

"My friends," said the gentleman in a most impressive tone, "never in my life have I witnessed an event so fraught with disaster to the various nations of the globe. In this calamity, we see the downfall of Turkey, the upsetting of Greece, the destruction of China, and the humiliation of Africa."

M. D. K.

The Irish of It.

THE other night a soldier of an Irish Fusilier regiment took his sweetheart to see *Cheer, Boys, Cheer* in a provincial theatre.

The woman saw a soldier near her dressed in the Highland uniform, and particularly took notice of the regimental badge on his cap and collar.

The badge is the figure and cross of St. Andrew, with the motto, "*Nemo me impune lacessit.*" Translated it means, "No one strikes me with impunity."

"Denis, wat does the writin' mane?" asked the woman.

"Shure," replied Denis, "it's Latin, but Oi've forgotten the maneing in English. But in Oirish it manes 'Tread on the tail ov me coat if ye dare!'"

A. A. H.

He Would Wrastle.

DEAN HOLE was once presiding at an agricultural dinner given to the men of his parish, among whom were a great many clod-hoppers, principally noted for heavy stolid looks, and a capacity for drinking huge cans of ale. The Dean had a quarter of lamb set before him to carve, which he proceeded to do by cutting off the shoulder and placing it on a plate to his left hand. A farm labourer sat next to the dean, and quietly surveyed this proceeding with a widely-opened mouth, and large incredulous eyes.

When the plate was put down, Hodge leaned both elbows on the table and surveyed the meat for quite two minutes' duration. Then he pulled the plate closer, leaning his face on one side, and gave a grunt of satisfaction. Then he shook his head and put his tongue in his cheek, as if rather perplexed. He evidently thought the meat was intended for him.

At last he gave a large guffaw, and pulling the plate quite in front of him, said, with a broad grin, as he looked into Dean Hole's face:

"Well, meester, it's a biggish bit; but I'll wrastle wi' it."

M. C.

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Not the Right Brand.

The mails from home had just been received by a certain regiment which forms part of Buller's force. Not only were there letters, but many parcels from relatives and friends at home for certain lucky soldiers.

One of the Tommies received a large box addressed to himself, and with a triumphant yell he rushed off to his company's lines and gathered them around him to share in the contents of his box.

"Smokes, lads!" he cried gloatingly, as he undid the wrappings. "From the old man. I knows it. An' there's sure to be a bottle or two of Scotch."

He opened the box, gave one look at its contents, and collapsed in a heap.

"What is it?" cried his comrades, pressing round.

"It's from ole Auntie Mary," groaned the disappointed warrior. "Bandages, an' ointment, an' embrocation, an' splints, an' a book on ''Ow to be Yer Own Surgin'!" W. J. D.

Ladies First.

Little Tommy and his younger sister were going to bed without a light. They had just reached the bottom of the stairs when Tommy, after vainly endeavouring to pierce the darkness, turned round and asked:

"Ma, is it polite for a gentleman to precede a lady when they have to walk in single file?"

"No, my son," replied his mother; "the lady should always take the lead."

"I thought so," said Tommy delightedly; "go ahead, Sue." P. S. A.

Nothing Extraordinary.

One of the stock of ancient legends relating to the Rock of Gibraltar, from which the passing griffs were formerly regaled, relates how a young Scotch subaltern was on guard with a brother officer, when the latter, in visiting the sentries, fell over a precipice and was killed.

When the survivor was relieved from duty, he made the customary written report in the usual form, "Nothing extraordinary." And this brought the brigade major down upon him in a rage.

"What! When your brother officer on duty with you has fallen down a precipice four hundred feet high and been killed, you reported 'nothing extraordinary.'"

"Weel, sir," replied the Scot, calmly, "I dinna think there's onything extraordinary in it ava. If he had fallen doon four hundred feet and not been killed—well, I should hae ca'd that extraornery." E. W.

Taken Over His Beat.

Here is a story concerning the examination of a young man who wished to be appointed a county police constable. He put in an appearance one morning accompanied by his mother, and was taken in hand for examination by the inspector. This progressed satisfactorily until the inspector observed:

"Of course you are aware you'll have a lot of night work to do? You are not afraid of being out late, I suppose?"

Before the candidate could reply, his mother electrified the official with the statement:

"That'll be all right, sir, never fear; his grandmother's going round with him the first two or three nights until he gets used to it." F. T.

An "Only Orphint," Too.

He had a bundle of papers under his arm, and was standing near the railway station, weeping.

"What is the matter, little boy?" asked a pleasant-faced gentleman.

"If I go home without selling me papers me feyther and mother will bate the life out of me, they will."

"That's bad."

"Yes, sir, and the worst of it is that I am an only orphint."

"Yes," replied the philanthropist, allowing a coin to drop back into his pocket, "only it doesn't often happen that a boy has such bad luck." W. A.

Certainly.

It is not often said that a youth takes his seat or suddenly as the one of whom we are about to speak, as keeps it as persistently. He was the keenest boy in the class, and when an unpopular professor said:

"Gentlemen, your next subject for composition will be manners," he at once rose and asked, "Can we write on bad manners, sir?"

The professor looked over his spectacles at the all-conquering youth, and quietly answered:

"Certainly. You can write about whatever you are best acquainted with." A. T. H.

He'd Seek Cover.

A staff sergeant at Aldershot was instructing a squad of recruits in the use of the rifle. He had been explaining to them the course taken by a bullet when fired at an object some distance away.

"Now, Private Murphy," he said, turning to one of the rear rank men, "you seem to be doing everything except looking to your front and paying attention. Perhaps you'll answer me a few questions. Suppose I was standing a thousand yards away by yonder farmhouse, and a body of men were firing at me from here, and you were half way between us, what would happen to you?"

Private Murphy: "The bullets would pass over my head, sergeant."

"Quite right; and what would happen to me?"

Private Murphy: "I hardly know, sergeant. I'm afraid ye'd get dodging behind the house." H. S.

He Did a Bit of Painting.

In one of the courts on a certain occasion a youth was engaged in making some sketches for an illustrated paper, and behind him stood a burly gentleman, who might have been taken for a county magistrate.

The latter watched the young artist for a while, and then, touching him on the shoulder, ventured to observe that this and that and the other points of the sketch were not exactly what they should be. The artist simply replied by inquiring, "What do you know about it?"

The gentleman persisted in kindly and persuasive criticism.

At length the youth, convinced that, after all, the criticism was just—indeed, the gentleman had himself taken the drawing-block and made the necessary alterations with his own hand—remarked:

"Well, you do seem to know something about it, certainly," adding, "Are you on any paper?"

"No," answered the gentleman, "I am not on any paper, but I do a bit of painting now and then. My name is John Millais." H. R. G.

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"SEND Sergeant Lester to me, Jones."

"Yessir."

The orderly glided from the tent and summoned Sergeant Lester who was enjoying a doze with his water-pouch for a pillow. He followed the orderly to the Colonel's tent, and then stood awaiting orders.

"You know the language of the Taal, do you not, my man?" asked the white-haired officer slowly, as he gazed at the man keenly.

"Very well indeed, sir."

"So I was given to understand by your commanding officer. Well, Lester, I have a mission for you which will require a little diplomacy and a good deal of courage. The mission is just this. You are to penetrate the camp on the north side of Ladysmith, and endeavour to find out when the enemy intend resuming their attack, and from what quarter it will come. Have you the necessary clothing?"

"I can easily obtain it, sir."

The sergeant's face flushed a little—and his eyes grew bright. The mission was dangerous—and that fact alone commended it to him—and if he was successful, promotion would doubtless follow when the campaign was ended—and there was a certain dark-eyed girl far away in Dover whose heart would throb with delight when she read in his letter of what he had done, and how he had been selected for a prominent undertaking in the Secret Service.

The Colonel shook hands with the man, wished him success, and then dismissed him, muttering as he went:

"He'll do it, if it is to be done."

Late that night, a man, dressed in the rough clothing of the Boer peasant soldier, took his place round the camp fire three miles north of Ladysmith, and chatted gaily with the Boers scattered there. The man was Sergeant Lester, and, seeing that he spoke the Taal (or Boer language) like a native, no suspicions were aroused by his appearance.

A smoking concert on a somewhat primitive scale was organised by a field cornet, who began proceedings by singing a song in a harsh, discordant tone. In order to make himself agreeable, Lester sang, and all went well.

Long before the camp settled down to sleep, the intrepid soldier had discovered what he wanted to know, and he was about to set out for the British encampment, when a rough hand was placed on his shoulder.

"You are leaving just as the sport is commencing, friend," said the owner of the hand, "the best is yet to come."

Wondering what the "best" might be, Lester allowed himself to be drawn into the crowd. A Boer then appeared bearing in his hand a huge picture of Queen Victoria, at the sight of which the men roared out cries of anger.

Lester set his teeth hard, guessing that some insult was about to be placed upon the Queen, but he told himself that whatever came, he must preserve his self-control, for if he betrayed his nationality, his life would be imperilled, and worse than that, his mission would be cancelled.

First of all the Boers ranged themselves round the picture and sang their national song in lusty chorus. Then a specially written verse, sung to the tune of "God Save the Queen," but expressing very different sentiments, was sung—but Lester kept silence, telling himself he could serve his Queen better by allowing the jeers to go unrebuked than by giving vent to his very natural feelings.

But worse was still to come, for a young Boer calmly walked towards the picture of our revered Queen and trampled upon it, every man in the room save Lester following his example. He held back.

"Why you hesitate?" asked one, hitting him roughly on the shoulder, "why you not do as we do?"

He cast about him for the first excuse, his blood on fire.

"She is a woman," he said—"even though she is Queen of the rooineks—she is a woman—and I cannot bring myself to do what you have done."

Some of the men laughed—and he heard a whisper go round the crowd that a similar ceremony would be performed on the following evening. When these words fell upon Lester's ears, his face changed—and his lips stiffened with resolution.

Night merged into the red dawn of the South African sky, and Sergeant Lester was within the British lines once more safe and sound.

"Well, sergeant?" It was the Colonel who spoke. "Well, sergeant, what news?"

"Capital, sir. I have discovered all that you wanted to know."

"Good, man!"

The Colonel, with an approving glance, listened attentively as the sergeant in concise soldierly manner confided to him what he had learnt in the Boer camp. He related every detail truthfully, concealing one thing only, the incident of the picture.

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"You have done your duty, and more than your duty," said the Colonel when the recital was finished. "I congratulate you, Sergeant Lester, and you may rely that your assistance on this occasion will not be overlooked. You can now go and report yourself to your commanding officer. Good-morning."

With a smile upon his face, Lester obeyed, and then very quietly he went to his kit-bag and took from it a sheet of paper and an envelope. He wrote a letter, very short and very simple, to a certain girl at Dover—telling her that he did not think it probable they would ever meet again, but that she must try and not mind very much.

"Last night," the note ran: "I undertook a mission for Queen and country. To-night I'm undertaking another mission for Queen alone—and somehow I don't think I shall come back."

Then with a firm hand, he signed the letter "Your loving George," wrote the address, and dropped it into the box.

"And now," he said grimly, "for work."

* * * * *

Everything was exactly the same as the night before as Sergeant Lester sat down beside the Boer camp-fire, and he was hailed with mirth.

"He has sprung from the bottom of a kopje," said one fat burgher as he filled his pipe, and then puffed away placidly.

"Or rather from a visit to England," said another with a huge grin, "where he has been paying his compliments to the Englishmen's queen."

A roar of laughter went round the fire, but Lester said nothing. He lit his pipe and smoked in silence, until the concert began, and to-night he refused to sing.

"Sullen pig," cried one man, as he prodded him with his rifle, "keep silent then, and I myself will show you how a song should be sung."

Then rising he proceeded to grunt out a few bars of a coarse ditty, but it evoked small enthusiasm until a brutal reference to Queen Victoria was made. A cheer went up, and the picture was produced as upon the previous evening. Once again the disgusting process was gone through—and once again Lester was directed to do as the others did.

To-night, however, he did not remain silent. Drawing himself up to his full height, he snatched the picture of his Sovereign from the stout Boer who held it, and with one well directed blow stretched the ruffian at his feet.

A roar of anger rose from the others, and in a moment Lester was surrounded, but he stuck to the picture, and each man that endeavoured to wrest it from his grasp received a token of a powerful British fist in the shape of a damaged eye or a broken nose. Never was summary vengeance for an insult, dealt out so speedily as it was dealt out to them—but alas, the business was one-sided enough—and within five minutes of the first blow, Lester was lying bound, bruised and helpless on the veldt.

"He is an accursed rooinek," said one of the men hoarsely, and then addressing Lester he asked:

"Can you deny that?"

"Deny it," he cried, "no, I own it, and I am glad to own it. Last night I was obliged to stand by and allow your dirty tricks to continue—but to-night things are different, and I fancy that I've shown you my opinion of your conduct."

The burghers held a hasty consultation among themselves. Some were for shooting Lester then and there, others wished to hang him, others again proposed that a dose of the sambok should be dealt out to him.

The council was interrupted by the arrival of a horseman.

It was the commandant, and in three minutes' time he had taken in the situation.

"Unbind the rooinek," he said sternly, "and let him speak."

The order was obeyed. Lester rose and faced the commandant steadily.

"Why have you come here?" asked the Boer officer coldly.

"To avenge an insult offered to my Queen!"

"You are an Englishman, then?"

"Thank Heaven I am!"

The commandant laughed brutally.

"I hear you were in this camp last night," he said, "and your presence was due no doubt to a desire to obtain information of our movements. Well, it is wartime, and we make short work of spies. Take him out and shoot him," he said carelessly, as he turned away, and then catching sight of Lester's calm and resigned features, he asked: "Have you anything to say?"

Lester smiled.

"Only, 'God Save the Queen,'" he answered firmly.

* * * * *

Two days later, by reason of the information brought by Sergeant Lester, the Boers were utterly routed in a victory which has since become famous, but among the names of dead and missing men flashed over the cables to the home country, was the name of one we know, and beside it was written the word "Missing."

The message was correct, for Sergeant Lester had gone to join the band of heroes that had passed before him in the service of the country of their birth and the Queen whom they loved. To no man, peer or peasant, is given a more worthy death.

P. Beaufoy.

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Dying as a Gentleman.

A DOZEN men sat around a camp-fire alongside the trail which led from Hope Valley to Woona-Walla. The trail was three hundred miles long, and ran uphill and down, over plain and through scrub, and now and then crossed a river or climbed a mountain.

The feet of three thousand Australian gold-hunters, accompanied for half the distance by waggons and pack-horses, had left such a plain road behind that the next three thousand could not go astray.

At no point on the trail could a dozen worse men have been picked out than the twelve who sat around Jim Agnew's camp-fire. They had banded together because they were bad. Had they travelled singly they would have fared badly at the hands of the crowd.

At nine o'clock at night, with every man ripe for mischief from the liquor he had imbibed, the camp had a caller—two of them. A man turned in from the trail and passed the fire and halted in the midst of the quarrelling gang and dropped a burden from his back.

It was a little girl seven or eight years old, and sound asleep. He pulled a blanket from under a man and spread it out to make a bed for the child, and he tucked her up with tender hand before he straightened up and looked about him and said:

"I carried her on my back from Sidney to Hope Valley, and finding the rush on I'm bound for Woona-Walla."

"And who may you be?" queried Jim Agnew of the stranger.

"A gentleman, sir, or the wreck of a gentleman," was the reply. "You call me Scott."

"And is this your child?"

"No, sir. Daughter of my ex-partner, Mr. Joe Taylor. He was another wreck of a gentleman. She was motherless, and when he died a few weeks ago he left her in my charge. Couldn't refuse to take her, sir—no gentleman could. Very interesting young person; bound to make a lady if properly reared and educated. She'll be waking up directly, and then we'll thank you for a bite to eat."

It was bearding the lion in his den. After two or three minutes the men recovered from their feeling of astonishment, and then there was resentment at the cool and nervy way their camp had been invaded. The man before them was ragged and unkempt, and dissipation was to be read in every line of his face, but yet instinct told them that he was not of their ilk. No matter what he was now, he had one day been a gentleman. There were mutterings and threats and presently Jim Agnew said:

"Say, I've heard of you! You are Scott, the gambler. You used to hang out at Red Hills."

"Your information is correct, sir. I used to be a gentleman. Then I was Scott, the gambler. At present I am Scott, the wreck of a gentleman and guardian of that child. Quite correct, sir."

"Hang your gentleman business!" shouted Jim as his temper began to boil up. "Say, boys, let's chip in and buy the kid. Mebbe she'll bring more luck than a humpback."

"Yes, let's buy the kid!" shouted half-a-dozen men in chorus.

"Gentleman," said the gambler, as he waved his hand towards the girl, who had been awakened by the shouts, "permit me to introduce Miss Ethel Taylor of Sydney, daughter of Mr. Joseph Taylor deceased, ex-convict, gambler, sharper, and bad 'un generally. In dying he left her in charge of his partner, the wreck of a gentleman who has now been a day and a half without food, but who wouldn't sell out his trust for all the gold in Australia."

"You'd better take a walk!" exclaimed Agnew after a long look at the gambler.

"After the girl has eaten, sir," was the quiet reply.

"The girl stays here."

"Not unless I am dead."

The man Agnew backed off a few feet and pulled a revolver from his belt and raised his arm until the muzzle was on a line with the gambler's right eye. The arm rested there, and as his fingers curled around the trigger he said:

"I'll give ye 'till I count five."

"My dear Ethel, good night and good-bye!" said Scott, as he half-turned and lifted his ragged cap to the girl.

She did not rise up nor call out. Agnew meant to kill the man before him if he did not move off, but after his words to the girl his arm slowly fell. There was silence for a minute, and then the boss of the gang said:

"Hang me, but you've got nerve! Sit down with the gal and fill up."

It was accounted a strange thing with the "rushers" to see a little girl among that band of "bad 'uns," each taking turn and turn about to carry her on his back, and both guardian and ward found themselves among friends. Indeed, before the new diggings were reached Jim Agnew and Scott were accounted "partners." It was stranger yet that little Ethel had a liking for Jim. He stood next to her guardian.

At Woona-Walla the child shared the tent or shanty with the two men. Child though she was, Scott treated her with almost as much formality as if she had been a girl of twenty. Agnew treated her as a child, and though his ways were rough and his speech shocked her at times, he won her heart more than the other.

Disappointment awaited hundreds of the rushers to Woona-Walla. One night, tired and discouraged, the two men sat smoking their pipes in silence for an hour, while the child played about or watched them and wondered if they had quarrelled.

By and by Scott looked up quietly and said:

"Jim, we are downed here."

"For sure," was the reply.

"Let's move on."

"Where?"

"Up the creek—down—over the hills—anywhere for

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her sake. I'm down to stay down, and the end is not far away, but I'd like to make a stake for her."

In the grey of the morning they took their way over the hills, one carrying the packs and the other the girl. Fifty miles away, on the banks of Brawling Creek, they made a camp, and two hours later were prospecting for gold. They found sufficient to encourage them to persevere, but not in quantities to rejoice over.

On the third day, the men left the girl asleep and moved further down the creek. She awoke and went searching for them upstream. She had walked for a quarter of a mile, calling as she went, when in trying to clamber up a bank she caught at and uprooted a bush. With the dirt and stones a nugget of gold rolled down into the stream and lay there like a spot of sunshine. An hour later Scott threw down his pick and said:

"Jim it's the richest spot on the face of the globe! There'll be a rush here of course, but we'll have our claims entered first. I'll start for Woona-Walla within half-an-hour."

In thirty minutes he was on his way over the hills, and in three days he was back again. It would have been no use to try to hide the new find. He had to state its location in order to file his claim, and the very official who made good his papers was at his heels as he made his way back to camp.

"I've got it," he said to his partner, after picking up the girl and kissing her. "Here it is—the 'Ethel Claim.' There'll be enough for both of you—aye! enough to make a dozen men rich!"

After supper that night the child climbed upon Scott's knee, and he stroked her hair until she fell asleep. For a long time after he had gently laid her down there was silence between the two men. He was the first to break it by saying:

"Jim, the girl is to go back to Sydney and be brought up a lady."

"Yes," replied Jim.

"Deal square with her and give her half."

"For sure, but where do you come in?"

Scott sat in the door of the shanty with his face upturned to the full moon. It was three or four minutes before he replied:

"Jim, you can't understand."

"But we've got gold—barrels of gold!"

"And I'm an old man—a drunkard, a gambler, a swindler, a wreck. Money could only bring new vices—new degradations. Can you understand?"

"No, hanged if I can."

"But you were not born and reared a gentleman. I wanted to make a stake for the girl. I've made it."

"And now what?" asked Jim.

Scott knelt down beside the sleeping child and kissed her. When he arose he held out his hand to his partner and said:

"Good bye, old man—give her a square divide."

"And you—you—?"

"Hush! Don't wake her!"

He passed out into the moonlight and up to the creek. Next morning they found his dead body half a mile beyond the last camp fire.

"Yes, he was my partner," said Jim as they called him to look at the dead man.

"And why did he kill himself?"

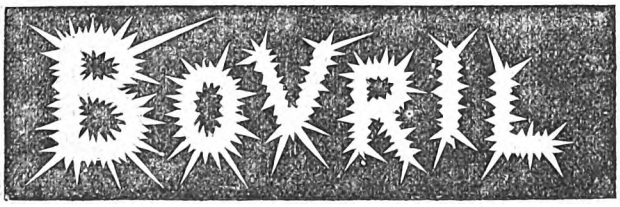
"Because he couldn't forget that he was once a gentleman."

M. QUAD.

On the Field of Battle

Bovril is playing a conspicuous part in upholding the British flag and contributing to the success of British valour. Sir Wm. MacCormac writes to the *Lancet* after the battle of Tugela:

"As each wounded man reached "the hospital he was served with a "hot cup of bovril, large cans of "which were boiling outside the "tents."



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AN AFRICAN LOVER.

THEY didn't care much for Dahome; he was a sacrilegious being. To him the "Image" had no beauty; it was only a thing of stone. And as for sacred power, he, in his own degenerate mind imagined that he could create more happiness and good feeling by human acts of kindness. In the village he was considered a loafer.

To pass down the opening between the huts, which did service for a street, and see Dahome stretched out at full length on a mat, that at the time of his retiring was in the shade, snoring as only a vagrant can snore, was no more than could be seen three hundred and sixty-five days of the year; and, as was his custom in his country, his dark skin being generously rubbed with grease, and a herb that perfumed the said grease, the flies that shared the occupancy of the village found a very comfortable and remunerative oasis to camp upon.

It was just before one of these fractional relaxations that Dahome conceived a plan whereby he would gain a few hours pleasure and at the same time compel a certain family in the village to testify, upon the sacred image, that he was not entirely a heartless vagabond.

Of course there was an object. Dahome, though a loafer and a vagabond, had concealed beneath his tough black skin a heart as red, and as liable to be pierced by the arrows of the little black angel as the Great Chief who owned the hut opposite the temple, and who had many weed bags full of the brightest stones and shells.

The Object was the only daughter of a widow who had lost her husband in a war between the local warriors and the fighting men of a village four days distant, and who at present occupied a hut on the outskirts of the circle. This hut had been deserted by the former occupants on account of the close proximity to a stream, where, it is said, a lion was wont to come to quench his thirst after the night's dissipation.

Now, this lion was an obstinate beast, since he refused to be captured, and positively declined to be exterminated by the bands of hunters that ventured forth, very foolishly, to wreak vengeance on his majesty, but turning the tables, very often hunted the hunters. When the lion took this very foolish idea into his obstinate brain, one, and sometimes more than one of these sanguine huntsmen never came back. Then there was weeping and wailing.

Dahome, lying on his broad back, thought of his long-lamented father, and how, when just gaining man's estate, that proud, big warrior had taught his only son the valuable use of the javelin.

Night after night they would steal down to the stream and wait for the game to appear, and, at last, when a fine large buck came to take his drink, Dahome's father had grasped him by the arm and told him to "throw."

Ah, how his heart beat. Thump! thump! thump! He was afraid the buck would hear it and escape. Then how his fingers grasped the long tough shaft of his weapon. He tried to give it the proper poise, but somehow or other it would not balance.

Someone surely must have been tampering with it while it was lying in the sun to season. Well, he must throw at all events, for had not the buck nearly finished?

Raising it to the desired position, with the full strength of his young muscular arm, he threw and closed his eyes. What was that snort and crackling noise? And what was that disturbance by his side?

Perhaps he had missed, and the buck seeing him throw had decided to take revenge for the attack.

Whir-r-r! Why, that sounded like another javelin whistling through the air. Taking courage, Dahome opened his eyes, and, behold, there was his father, on the other side of the brook, bending over the carcase of the dead buck.

Picking his way across the stream, though with a very sheepish expression, Dahome learnt that his javelin had done no damage more than scare the buck. But his experienced father's had brought him down before he had gone half a heavy stone's throw.

But now matters were different. Though he was known as the village loafer, every afternoon, as the sun reached a certain stick, set there for that purpose, and until it had left half the hut in shadow, Dahome could be seen throwing his spear and flint knives at a target rigged some distance off. And as for hunting, well, no one in the village could supply the larder in as short a time as Dahome.

Reflecting on all occurrences, and planning his *grand coup*, was more than Dahome could endure. It was noticeable that he slept longer and more soundly than usual that day. So noticeable, in fact, that one of his neighbours, passing after the night was well set in, was kind enough to poke him in the ribs with a spear, and tell him that he had overslept himself. What a foolish remark! Didn't Dahome know very well that he had slept longer than was his wont? And then, again, what business was it of his neighbours whether he slept long, or did not sleep at all?

Reluctantly rising from his mat, and rubbing his greasy eyes with his more greasy knuckles, he growlingly went into the hut to prepare supper, only to find that through his laziness there was nothing in the place fit to eat. And, oh, he was so hungry! Well, there was only one thing to do, and that was to take his trusty spear and see if he couldn't bag some kind of game to sustain life until to-morrow. Acting as the cravings of hunger directed, he started out into the moonlight in search of his evening meal.

'Twas strange that he should find himself in front of a certain hut on the extreme outer edge of the circle, when he could have gone in the opposite direction from his abode, and with a better chance to secure game. But, nevertheless, there he was, and no game over his shoulder.

But what was that movement in yonder clump of trees? At last here is a chance for supper. Throwing himself on the ground at full length, Dahome crawled towards the tree. When within easy throwing distance, and while preparing his javelin, a soft purring sound which gradually swelled into a plantive love chant, floated from the clump of trees, and presently there stepped out, in all the beauty of her youth—by the thirteenth arm of the Image—the Object.

How beautiful she is! Her ebony skin reflects the moonbeams, and as she moves they strike at her, only to be parried and thrown off into space. Her beautiful hair is done up in one knot, on the top of her head, and

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A STRAWBERRY PICNIC.

The *Morning Leader*, July 13th, 1898, says:—"Messrs. S. Chivers & Sons, "the well-known jam and jelly manu- "facturers, understand the art of "entertainment no less than the art of "jam-making. On Tuesday they "invited a number of Pressmen to a "strawberry picnic at their farm at "Histon, Cambridge. The wondering "pickers were delighted with the sight "of two-score top-hatted visitors "bending their backs to the willing "task of finding large strawberries. "It is just twenty-five years since "Messrs. Chivers started jam-making. "They now have a thousand acres of "land under cultivation, and employ. "when busy, eight hundred hands. "The jam factory is within the circle "of the fruit fields, and the fruit can "therefore be handled without delay."

At the luncheon which followed, a Cambridge Alderman and J.P. said:— "When he was shown over the factory "a year ago he was struck by the "healthy appearance of the employés, "the women and girls looking well and "joyous, so different from the condi- "tion of things in some factories he "had visited."

A London manufacturer expressed the opinion that the root of Messrs. Chivers' "success was the high excel- "lence of their goods, which had made "their mark in the commercial world. "People who had the goods once, "repeated their orders."

The Official Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture, 1895, says:—"Messrs. Chivers' factory at Histon "is now well-known throughout the "country for the excellence of its "manufactures."

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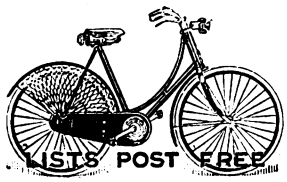

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resplendent with various coloured grasses; and in her nose the dearest little tusk that ever came out of an animal's mouth. How Dahome loved her! Hidden in the tall grass he could see her and admire to his heart's content. Listen! what are those words she is singing?

"Dahome, son of the Sun,
I love you, I love you;
Come to me, my own loved one,
For I love you, I love you."

Now, Dahome was not a bit bashful, so when such an inducement was offered him he was not slow in accepting it. To be sure, she was frightened, for, when her ardent lover answered the request, "Come to me, my own loved one," he did it so quickly that she found herself being very tightly hugged, and at first didn't know by whom. After scolding him for his impetuosity and the disarrangement of her hair, she was very willing, at his request, to retire back to the clump of trees and have him tell of his love for her. Unfortunately Dahome's voice was not a musical one, for when he tried to sing his love as she had done, he awakened the mother of the Object, who immediately demanded that her darling "should come into the house this instant," and, furthermore, that she "ought to be ashamed of being in the company of Dahome, the vagrant."

When Dahome aroused himself from the stupor in which he had fallen after the departure of the Object he realised that something desperate must be done to convince his loved one's mother that he was a splendid match for her charming daughter. And so ended his first night's wooing.

After that on every moonlight night, Dahome was to be seen hunting in the vicinity of the Object's hut. One beautiful evening, many moons after the memorable one, he had taken his friend, the javelin, and had ventured forth to procure his supper. It is needless to say that he eventually found himself near the stream, opposite his heart's desire's dwelling. Pausing in the tall grass, he relapsed into deep thought, thoughts of the future. How should he gain the goodwill of the mother? There was the rock on which he struck and stayed. Give her presents? That he could not do, for he had none to give. Become a warrior and gain glory on the field? No; for that was too much of a risk, and Dahome did not inherit his father's warlike spirit. Trouble and danger were things he did not care to look for. Ah, well, time and true love would find a way to overrule the matron's objections. Reflecting thus, Dahome had almost fallen asleep.

Lulled by the music of the brook, and the singing of the insects, a man less fond of the influence of Morpheus than our own vagrant, might have found it difficult to remain awake.

From a certain clump of trees came a soft, purring sound, that Dahome knew very well. As the music increased in volume and tempo, Dahome shook off the languid influence and planned a surprise for his loved one.

Arising, he commenced to pick his way towards the trees where she was singing. Ah! how he would steal up behind her and take her in his strong arms. He pictured to himself how she would start and scream, and try to escape, and then, after a word of love from him, she would stop struggling and, laying her darling little head upon his broad shoulder, whisper words of love.

There she is, reclining on a bank of moss. Her plump, round arms thrown above her head, and looking dreamily at the moon. How Dahome hated that moon, for is there not a man's face there? Who knows but that it is one of the gods trying to steal his darling from him.

Look! her lips move, but no sound reaches him. Her arms untwine from over her head and are raised towards that cursed face. Why, now, wonder after wonder, the lips of that face seem to move and smile! Oh, that the Image would put strength enough in his arm so that he could hurl his javelin through that hated bodiless god. But why not try? Grasping his spear more firmly he prepared to throw.

Stop! listen! There is no wind stirring, yet was not that a distinct rustling of the leaves. Again that sound. It is in the direction of the Object; but no, she is asleep. Soothed by her own song, she had dropped back on her improvised couch, and was now in the land of sweet visions.

But what are those two small spots in that dense blackness of the underbrush? Now the spots grow larger, now smaller, they come nearer, they are approaching the light. Now appears an indistinct form; now more clearly a majestic head, a lithe body, a flowing mane and a restless tail. By the shade of his beloved father—the lion! Now he is in the moonflood. How beautiful, how dangerously beautiful!

Dahome, Dahome, arouse yourself! Think no more of the ethereal god, there's better work for you now. There's a god of the jungle ready to destroy the beloved of your heart. I implore the Image to give you strength, not to reach the moon, but to fight a far more dangerous rival. For, see how the lion licks his red chops! Be careful, Dahome, he is going to kiss your love and you know that his caresses mean death. Don't allow him to embrace her, for when he shall have finished you may see her in the arms of the moon god. Now is the time to get her for yourself. If you kill the lion you may demand her from her stingy old mother by the right of conquest, and then think what a hero you will be in the village? Think of the bags of bright stones that await the man who brings the lion's head to the temple. Think of the crown of flowers that will be placed on your proud head. No more will they call you lazy vagrant.

There, that is right; fix your trusty spear and throw. Throw hard now, for there are no more spears at hand, and the first must kill. See how it glistens and sparkles as it cuts through the moonbeams. It strikes the lion—gods, what a deafening roar! Dahome, Dahome, you did not aim well, he is only wounded. Hide if you can, for he is looking for you. Ah, too late! here he comes. That's it, use your flint knife. Thrust, man, thrust for his heart. Oh, Image, if you've any power at all, use it in protecting this brave young man? See, the lion has borne him down. That's a good manœuvre, Dahome, let him chew that left arm; but use your knife with your right as fast as you can. One, two, three—and every lunge sends the knife up to the hilt in the body of the lion. Good, good! that last stroke reached his heart; for, see! he is still—thank the gods, he is dead. And now, Dahome, you may pull your scratched and torn self together and find that little girl that disappeared in the direction of her hut when the lion first roared.

Come man, get up, leave the embrace of that horrid, bleeding beast—you're a hero now, Dahome. Dahome! Ah, it is no use calling him—he is asleep again. But this time it's not a vagrant's snooze—it's the peaceful sleep of death, awarded to a hero.

G. Osborne.

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The Brain Gymnasium.

On this page, under the title "The Brain Gymnasium," appear each week a series of puzzles calculated to occupy the attention of the competitors with interest and profit to themselves.

In these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no list of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, Short Stories, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by Monday, March 19th, 1900.

No. 58.

My first is a seaman; my first and second a person of irritable temper; and my whole is an Asiatic district.

No. 59.

I am dryness itself; put my tail in place of my head, and I am a drinking vessel; behead me, and I am uncouth; again behead me, add my original tail, and I should be anything.

No. 60.

The first two letters of two European countries, the second two letters of a South American Republic, and the first and third letters of a division of Ireland, when properly arranged, will form the name of a Roman hero.

No. 61.

With a certain number of strokes form a number, and by adding a similar number of strokes, make the number ten times as great. Remove the same number of strokes, and put as many in their place, and leave what would signify a "duffer."

No. 62.

A	A	E	E			
E	E	E	E			
E	E	I	I			
L	L	L	L	M	N	N
			N	P	R	R
			S	S	U	U
			V	V	Y	Y

Re-arrange the letters given here so that two word squares are formed, the connecting word of which signifies "bondage."

No. 63.

2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

Repeat three of the above figures four times and one eight times, and then arrange the twenty-one numbers so that four squares are formed, the total sum of each square being thirty-two.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES

Appearing in No. 581, February 17th.

No. 40. RE-TURN, TURN-ER.

No. 41. HEROINE.

No. 42. REMARK-ABLE.

No. 43.

T i B e r
e Y e
R
d O n
k a N d y

No. 44.

P O S C I C S L C P
C O T T O N O P O L I S
O T O O T I I O I N
L O P P O L N T P T

No. 45.

R A S P
A R E A
S E A S
P A S S A G E
A L O E
G O A L
E E L S

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Nos. 34 to 39.

In this week's competition, twenty-eight competitors were absolutely correct. We have again a ded to the prizes offered (viz., £2 and ten silver plated pencil-cases) and are forwarding to each of the following a postal order for two shillings, together with one of the pencil-cases.

Miss Jenkin, Ebbw Vale; A. Carter, Brixton, S.W.; C. H. Wilkins, Battersea, S.W.; H. Wellard, Tunbridge Wells; Ernest Bloom, Harringay, N.; E. Hutchings, High Holborn, W.C.; Malcolm Spurgin, Peterboro'; J. B. Murless, Shrewsbury; J. Pearson, Hyde, Cheshire; J. Kean, Edinburgh; Miss M. Connell, Hertford; C. A. Young, East Dulwich; J. A. Watts, Balham, S.W.; H. Chadwick, Clerkenwell, E.C.; H. Quinton, Southampton; A. P. Hamilton, Edinburgh; J. McCormick, Dublin; C. H. Poynter, Southampton; W. Crampton, Manchester; Miss J. Bullen, Richmond; H. Cawte, Camberley; Mrs. Moran, Edinburgh; Miss H. Marcus, Blackheath, S.E.; H. Watts, Chelsea, S.W.; Miss Van Praagh, South Hampstead; M. Van Praagh, South Hampstead; F. Culyer, West Norwood; M. Read, West Dulwich, S.E.

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" half	6 5 0

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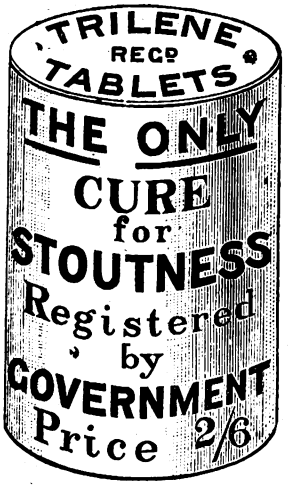
ALL FAT PEOPLE

Can be **CURED** by taking

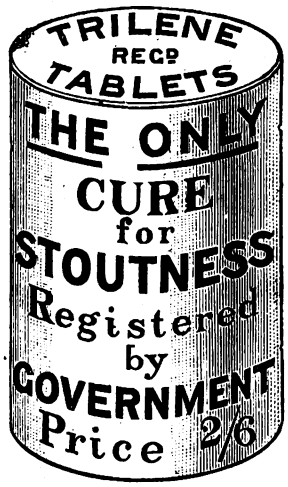
TRILENE TABLETS Regd



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

Send **2s. 6d.** to **THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION**, 66 Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1899.

'Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

MRS. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st. and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 2llb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me. "Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Riseholme Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

FATHER T. M. BYRNE, of Holy Cross Abbey, Sligo, writes: "When I began your Tablets I was 12st. 5lb.; I now scale at 10st. 11lb.—my case, too, is hereditary."

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44, Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 81b., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to ake more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. WHITEHOUSE, of Poplar Avenue, Edgbaston, writes: "My husband is in splendid health, and has lost 15lb. in weight since taking the Tablets; I am sure I thank you on his account."

MRS. H. COX, 23 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

MR. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs, says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mr. BUTLER, Surgeon, M.R.C.V.S., of Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient has lost 1st. in weight whilst taking your Tablets."

MRS. E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. BADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

MRS. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver nr Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 62 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

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State size required.

A boon for tender & tired feet

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OROCO M'F'G. Co. WIGAN.

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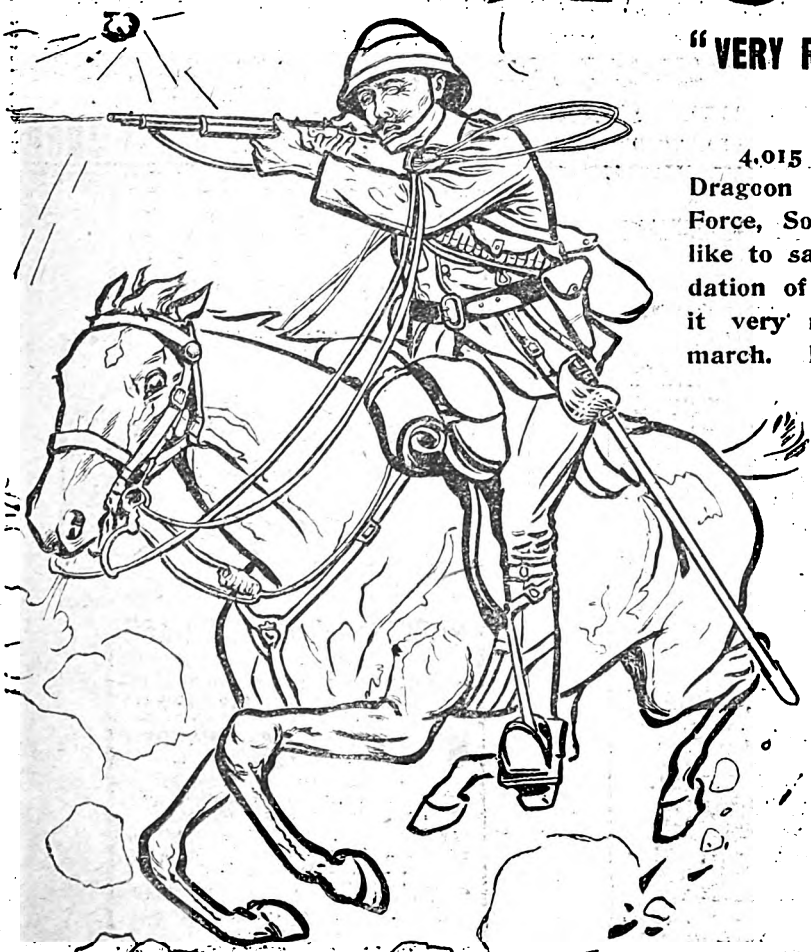
SHORT STORIES

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN

No. 585. FOR WEEK ENDING MARCH 17TH, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

A PRIVATE IN THE DRAGOONS AND

DR. TIBBLES' Vi-Cocoa



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4,015 PRIVATE G. H. DAY, 6th Dragoon Guards (Carabiniers), Field Force, South Africa, writes: "I should like to say a few words in recommendation of your Vi-Cocoa. I have found it very refreshing after a long day's march. I have strongly recommended it to my comrades, and those who have had the good fortune to obtain it speak most highly of it."

A dainty Sample Tin will be sent Post Free to any address, if, when writing (a post-card will do), the name of *Short Stories* is mentioned.

Address: DR. TIBBLES' VI-COCOA LTD., 60, 61, and 62 BUNHILL ROW, LONDON, E.C.

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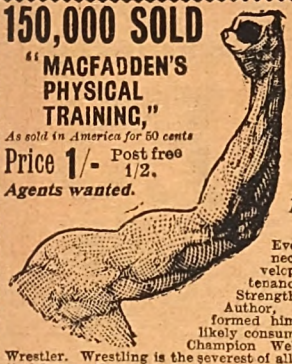
As sold in America for 50 cents

Price 1/- Post free 1/2.

Agents wanted.



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when for 2/6 you can have a pair of the "K" Trousers Stretchers, as used by society and military gentlemen.

Makes Trousers *always fit, feel, and look like new.* Sent free from observation per return of post and post free for 2/6. Two Pairs, post free for 4/6. A Nickelled Cigar Cutter, with ring for attaching to watch chain, will be given *free* to all sending orders within seven days of date of this paper, which please mention.

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Strengthen your Grip. Strengthen your Wrist. Develop Enormous Strength in Fingers. Cure Writer's Cramp. Cure Bicycle Cramp. Cure Cold Hands. Cure Trembling Hands.

With a "Health and Strength"

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Physicians and Athletes have generally concurred that the wrist is the weakest portion of the human frame. It is the portion of the anatomy where strength is measured.

A person with weak wrists is a weak person constitutionally. When the wrists are strengthened the entire muscular system is made stronger.

There is no point in a man's anatomy where lack of strength is felt so much as in the wrist, nor where great strength is so useful, often seriously affecting his bread-winning power. With a systematic use of this machine only ten minutes twice a day you can double the strength of your hand in one month, and increase the size of your forearm very materially.

Purchasing and using a pair of Wrist Machines—one in each hand—saves half the time occupied in exercising both hands with one machine, and also ensures a more equal development of strength in the two hands.

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Prices—ONE, 2/6, Post Free, 2/8. TWO, 4/9, Post Free.

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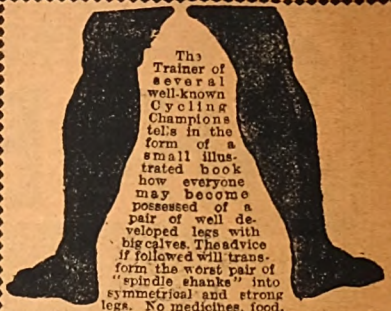

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Send 2s. 6d. to **THE TRILENE CO.**, Sole Proprietors, **66 Finsbury Pavement, London.**

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 23lb., and I am cured." Mrs. Darnley-Smith, of Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, says: "Tablets have reduced me very much." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Comston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

VARICOCELE.

Every man suffering from Varicocele and the allied troubles, should send for treatise, describing their Causes, Symptoms, Results, and Successful and Painless Treatment without surgical operation or the use of cumbersome trusses and electrical appliances. Will be sent sealed, post free, three stamps.

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SHORT STORIES

No. 585.] [1d.

For the Week Ending March 17th, 1900.

THE MASCOT OF THE CARABINIERS.

"HARTLEY!"

The voice came softly through the still African night, with a stealthy, guarded utterance, that conveyed a distinct note of danger.

The hat of a Cape Carabinier popped up from behind a boulder on the ridge above, and a strong, square-jawed face showed dimly through the darkness.

"Well?"

"Did you hear anything?"

"Nothing."

"Strange! I thought I did."

"Where?"

"Out on the veld yonder."

"Well, keep your peepers skinned down there. It won't do to be caught napping. This isn't anything in the picnic line, you know."

With which sagacious reminder, the face and the Carabinier hat disappeared again, and silence fell on the hill once more.

On the ledge below Trevor Hamilton continued to pace the length of his beat, his head going round towards the black void yonder every few seconds, where night hung over the silent veld.

The clank of the spurred heel upon the loose stones,

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the jingle of accoutrements, and occasionally the stifled yawning "Heigho!" that came from the weary Carabinier, posted somewhere on the hillside, were the only sounds that broke the stillness of the rocky height.

Suddenly Hamilton pulled up short, with a quick indrawing of his breath. His keen, sensitive ear had caught that sound again—that strange, far-off sound, which seemed so oddly out of place in this barren range of hill and veld.

"Hartley! I say, Hartley!" he called, as softly as before.

"Confound it! What?"

There was a querulousness in the tones which seemed to convey the suspicion that despite the caution which had dropped from him on the score of "napping," Trooper Hartley had been doing something in that line himself behind the boulder up there.

"Come here; quick."

There was a growl on the ridge above, and the big Carabinier came slipping and sliding down through the darkness, swearing softly but profusely at the Boers, the darkness, outpost duty, and human affairs in general.

"Well, what is it?" he asked, when he reached his comrade's side.

The other held up his hand, and bent his ear towards the ground.

"Listen!" he said. "Do you hear it?"

"By jove! I do."

"What do you make of it?"

"Seems a bit odd, but it sounds to me exactly like the mewing of a cat."

"So it does to me."

"But what on earth brings the creature out there on the veld? There's not a house—not even a Kaffir hut—for ten miles around."

"That's what we've got to find out."

They listened again—intently, breathlessly, and up from the plain floated the faint, plaintive mi-ouw. Somehow, it seemed to strike upon them like a call for help.

"Don't altogether like the look of it," muttered Hamilton. "Might be some crafty trick of the Boers, for all we know."

"Ay, if they were hanging about anywhere," answered his companion. "But they're a good twenty miles off still."

"Don't be too sure of that, my friend. They're always on the move, trailing about all over the shop. I shouldn't be a bit surprised if there was a strong commando out on the veld there at the moment, and that this was just a feeler of their scouts to ascertain if these hills are occupied."

"Hullo! here comes the relief," put in Hartley. "We'd best get back and report the matter, anyhow."

There was a steady tramp, tramp, on the ridge above, a challenge, and the rattle of carbines as arms were grounded. The two below scrambled up the rocky slope, both eager to request leave to investigate this curious affair.

Captain Dewhurst, the officer in charge of the outposts had come round with the relief, and to him they hastened to make their report.

"Seems strange, certainly," he said, when he had heard them out. "It might be just as well to get at the bottom of it, trivial as it appears; for with a small, detached force such as ours, no precaution can be overlooked. We don't want another Nicholson's Nek affair."

He thought the matter over for a moment, gnawing his moustache in considerable doubt and perplexity.

"Well, you had better slip down quietly, you two, and see what you can make of it," he said, at length. "Get back as quickly as you can; I'll wait here for your report."

Scarcely were the words out of his mouth before the two had disappeared from the ridge, and were creeping warily down towards the veld. So gingerly did they pick their steps that not even a loose stone was dislodged in the descent.

Once at the foot of the hill, with the hummocky plain stretching away before them, they felt in their element. Both were born scouts—the pick of the Carabiniers in this respect—and generally hunted together, too. A prowl of this kind, with a spice of danger to brace them up, was a sort of thing very much after their hearts.

It would have required a remarkably keen eye to detect either of the crouching figures as they slipped noiselessly along through the darkness. The plaintive mi-ouw mi ouw, still came to them, feeble and muffled at times, then louder and more distinct.

"Where do you think it proceeds from?" Hartley whispered across to his companion.

"Bear away a little to your right," was the answer. "It seems to be somewhere in that direction."

On they crept—wary, watchful, keenly on the alert. They were moving straight for the spot now; the cry was right ahead of them.

Presently Hamilton, who had the eye of a hawk, edged his way across to the other, and laid a restraining hand on his arm. In an instant both were down flat on the ground.

"What is it?" whispered Hartley.

Hamilton raised his head a little, and peered steadily through the darkness.

"I do believe—yes, it *is* a cat, after all," he said.

"Where?" asked Hartley, his eyes sweeping round.

Hartley struck a match, and, shading the light between his hands, took a good look at the animal.

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"Perched on the top of that boulder yonder."

They stole cautiously towards the spot. A big, black cat, which was sitting disconsolately upon the stone, got upon its legs, and mewed at them with outstretched neck.

Hartley struck a match, and shading the light between his hands, took a good look at the animal. A stifled cry broke from him.

"Why," he exclaimed, glancing up at his companion, "that's Miss Kennealy's 'Kruger!'"

"Upon my word, I believe you're right," Hamilton answered, with a shade of uneasiness in his tones.

The two men looked at each other with grave, questioning faces, until the match burnt down and scorched Hartley's fingers.

If any doubt lingered in their minds, it was quickly removed by the creature itself. On hearing its name pronounced, it hopped nimbly off its perch, with a sort of confirmatory mi-ouw, and rubbed itself against their legs. Then it trotted away to some little distance, paused, and looked back at them, its eyes scintillating in the starlight.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Hamilton, "there's something queer in this, Hartley."

"Looks like it," answered the other. "It strikes me that we'd better follow 'Kruger's' lead for once."

The two carabiniers had started to run.

The cat, seeing they were moving after it, trotted on again. Every few seconds its head came round, as if to make sure that they were not lagging behind. It led them towards a dip in the ground, about fifty or sixty yards away.

Hamilton was the first to reach the lip of the hollow. Peering down he made out something white lying at the bottom.

The object, whatever it was, suddenly moved, and the next second a feeble moan of suffering came up to him.

"Good Heavens!" he cried out. "Is that you, Miss Kennealy?"

"Yes," was the reply. And then, with a sharp catch of the breath, indicative of pain, the girl added, "That is Mr. Hamilton I think?"

For answer, he went flying down the slope, closely followed by the astonished Hartley. In a moment they were at her side.

"Oh, I'm so glad that you are friends!" she cried, looking up at them, but without attempting to rise. "I thought at first it might be the Boers."

"The Boers!" they exclaimed.

"Yes. Have you seen nothing of them yet?"

"Not a sign."

"Oh, I am in time, then!" she cried.

"In time! For what?"

"To stop you from advancing. The Dutch are lying in wait for you among the Lothulia Hills—in ambush there. I——" She broke off suddenly, and caught in her lips with a little moan of pain.

"Are you hurt, Miss Kennealy?" asked Hamilton, bending over her with anxious solicitude.

"Oh, it is nothing very much," she answered, lightly. "I tumbled down here in the dark, and gave my ankle a nasty twist."

In an instant they had lifted her tenderly from the ground; and then, clasping hands, formed a seat for her. With an arm round the neck of each, she was carried from the hollow, and they bore her swiftly back towards the hill.

As they hurried on across the veld with their burden, the girl told them her story.

It appeared that a body of Boers had looted her uncle's place that very morning, and turned the two of them out of house and home. The old man they compelled to start off in one direction; the girl in another. Her cat "Kruger," who was accustomed to follow her about like a dog, stole away after her.

Before leaving the house, she had overheard two of the Boers in conversation. Having a fair knowledge of their language, she was enabled to gather from what they said that someone down at Freemont station was keeping them posted up in every movement on the part of the British. From him they learnt that a column was to be detached, in order to turn their flank, and a strong commando had been sent out to lie in wait for it among the Lothulie Hills. No sooner was she out of their clutches than she started off across country to try and intercept the column, and frustrate the treachery of the rascally spy.

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"Did you hear the scoundrel's name?" Hamilton asked, between his clenched teeth.

"Yes," she said. "I think it was Plover, or Glover, or—— Oh, oh! you very nearly let me fall!"

No doubt they did. The name was familiar to both; and at the first moment their consternation was so great that they well-nigh dropped their burden on the spot. Joseph Glover was the English postmaster at Freemont!

"You are quite sure of this, Miss Kennealy?" asked Hamilton.

"Oh, yes," she replied, "It appears that every item of information is wired to them regularly."

That was quite enough. With a little cry the girl clutched them both tightly around the neck, for the two Carabiniers had started to run.

Captain Dewhurst was not a little astonished when he beheld his scouts bearing a white-clad form up the hill, and noticed that the little party was accompanied by a big black cat.

When he heard their story, he complimented the girl warmly on the splendid courage she had displayed in undertaking a ten-mile walk across the open veld in order to warn them of their danger.

The two troopers bore her on to the camp, where, when the news got out, she was accorded a magnificent reception. After a brief interview with the commander of the column, she was placed in the doctor's charge, while the Cape Carabiniers took upon themselves the care of the cat.

In less than half-an-hour a score or so of troopers rode out from the camp, and clattered away towards Freemont, which lay about five miles to the rear. Arriving there, Mr. Joseph Glover was hauled unceremoniously out of bed, and it required all the influence of the officer in charge to restrain the men from talking summary vengeance upon the scoundrel there and then.

As it was, a court-martial was held in the British camp that night, and at daybreak next morning the pitiful wretch met with his deserts.

* * * * *

The position occupied by the column being a strong one, it was decided to hold on to it during the day. At nightfall the force stole out, and trailed away across the veld, moving forward with the utmost rapidity.

But the Boers waited for them in vain among the Lothulie hills. Instead of proceeding in that direction as was originally intended, the British Commander gave it a wide berth, and slipped quietly past in the darkness.

At dawn next morning, he fell upon the main body of the Dutch, who, never for a moment suspecting that their little plan had miscarried, were taken by complete surprise, and the British force succeeded in turning their flank. The action was a most brilliant and successful one; and of all the troops engaged, the corps which distinguished itself most was the Cape Carabiniers.

Foremost in every charge they made that day were Troopers Hamilton and Hartley. The latter, indeed, was placed *hors de combat* towards the close, being dragged out of the fray with a brace of Mauser bullets in his big body.

As he lay in the field hospital that night, Hamilton, who felt almost like a brother to this great, big-hearted comrade of his, came in search of him. He found him woefully despondent.

"I'm done for, old man," said Hartley, looking up at him. "We'll do no more scouting together, you and I. But there's just one little thing I wanted to speak to you about before I go under."

"What's that?" asked his friend.

"It's—it's—about Miss Kennealy!"

Hamilton started, and looked down at the prostrate form as if a light had suddenly dawned upon him.

"Yes, you've hit it," responded the other. "I was fond of her too, you know; but I could see with half an eye that it was you she preferred, and so I kept in the background. Perhaps you'll tell her about it after I'm gone."

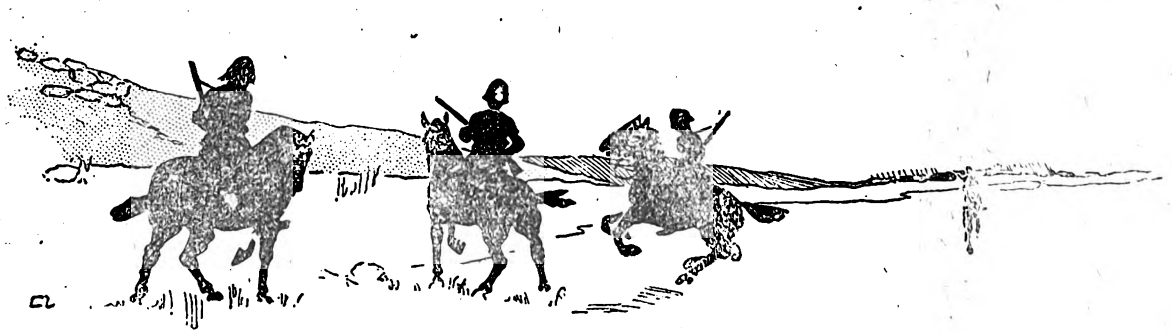
Hamilton, with averted head, pressed his hand in silence, and a great sorrow lay on his heart as he returned to his troop.

But in spite of his gloomy forebodings, Hartley did not "go under" after all. The Boers were often to feel the weight of his brawny arm again. When he returned to duty, and learnt that Hamilton was engaged to Miss Kennealy, he heaved a mighty sigh, and went off to try and get a slap at the Dutch by way of consoling himself.

Miss Kennealy presented the sagacious "Kruger" to the Carabiniers, and they regard the animal as a much-prized mascot. If you want to get their dander up against the Boers, just bring that cat to the fore.

The very sight of it seems to remind them of the day that a delicate girl was turned out on the trackless veld by those heartless wretches—to perish there, for all they cared.

J. L. Hornibrook.



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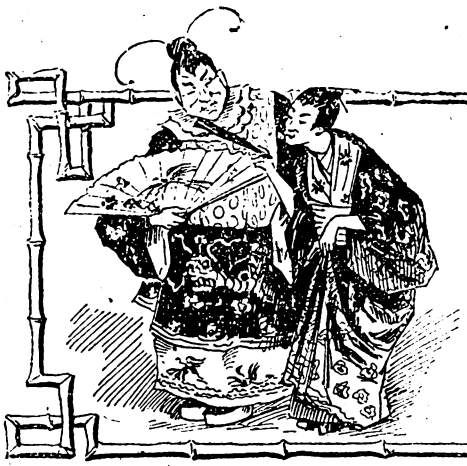

THE POLICE CONSTABLE AND THE FRUIT-SELLER.

It might be interesting to consider what fateful power it is that seizes two individuals born at opposite ends of the earth and hurries them along through varied scenes and vicissitudes, each ignorant of the other's existence, bringing them together sometimes in love and friendship, sometimes in enmity and deadly hatred.

These philosophic thoughts were suggested a few days ago, as we passed a fruit stand, which stood at a busy spot well to the east of Aldgate Station.

By that stand, presiding over its destinies, was a black-haired, black-eyed, black-eyebrowed, olive-complexioned daughter of Greece. By that stand and gazing into those Greek optics was a stalwart form with red hair, blue eyes, blue coat and helmet, and Jubilee medal on breast. He looked good-natured and honest and wore a well-trimmed blonde moustache. There was one defect in his physique—he was so round-shouldered as to be almost humpbacked. His name was Michael O'Callaghan, or, as he himself put it, "Police Constable Michael O'Callaghan."

There they stand, the one for aught we know a lineal descendant of Leonidas, if that worthy had ventured into matrimony before he ventured into Thermopylæ: and the other—it goes without saying—a descendant of somebody equally ancient and illustrious. Yes, there they stand—from Ireland and Greece—making love to each other on the kerbstones at a busy spot in the World's Capital. Oh, love, they say you rule the court, the camp, the grove; you do indeed, and you rule the kerbstones, the apple stands, and the police force.

How Mr. Michael O'Callaghan had ever succeeded in making love to the fair Zoe—for that was the name of this Pythoness of the apple stand—the boy Eros himself only can tell! for Zoe's vocabulary in English was limited to such trade terms as "two fo' penny," "three fo' tuppence," and Michael's knowledge of modern Greek was, if anything, more limited. Love laughs at locksmiths; but the little rascal in this case seemed equally to laugh at languages, and the tower of Babel had no more penal consequence for him than if it never raised its defiant head to an offended Heaven.

The constable's beat embraced the spot on which stood the apple stand, and surely no policeman ever travelled his district so rapidly as he did. Ever and anon, his medal flashing coruscations of light, and his eyes, blue as his native skies, when it is not raining there, flashing coruscations of love, would round the corner and approach the apple stand

"How much?" he would say, holding an apple which Zoe had burnished that morning with a greasy rag, while the Volapuk language of love would say more truly than ever Byron said it

"Zoe mou sas agapo,"

and Zoe would answer with a smile and a not unmusical voice:

"Two fo' penny."

Then they would rummage amid the fruit, their hands would meet, a little surreptitious squeeze of the fingers would follow and then this guardian of the peace would march along, twirling his moustache, lowly whistling "The Girl I left behind Me," and dreaming dreams no "copper" ever dared to dream before. These day dreams generally took the form of a cosy little home, with Zoe its mistress, and a little Græco-Irish O'Callaghan crowing and kicking up its heels on the floor.

Several times each day that unspoken comedy of love was performed. Day after day Michael boldly gazed into those dark Grecian eyes, and Zoe stole bashful glances into the Irish blue ones, and the surreptitious finger-squeezing was perpetrated; but never a word was spoken save:

"How much?"

"Two fo' penny."

The time had now come when language was a necessity, and towards this desideratum our Lothario in blue as he marched through the crowded streets, bent all the energies of his thinking powers. Many methods rapidly suggested themselves to his fervid imagination and were as rapidly rejected, and many a smile played over his broad face as he saw the "bull" in some of those suggestions.

One day, when off duty, while immersed in deep thought, he was suddenly aroused by a commotion issuing from a crowd of small boys in a narrow court.

It was only a fight between two street-arabs. The others had formed a ring, and various words of encouragement were offered by the young spectators to the champions in the ring. At another time, Michael would have passed this matter by; but now he felt that he was prospectively the head of a family and that he would not tolerate such things. On tiptoe he approached the scene of the combat.

As Michael approached he heard someone in the crowd scream:

"Look out there, Jim, he's got a knife."

The boys, ranging in every degree of dirty-facedness

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and tatteredness, were too intent on the struggle to notice the officer, who reached the outer edge of the crowd unseen.

One of the boy combatants, with swarthy face, scrowling brow, and a recently acquired black eye, stood at one side of the ring like a hunted animal at bay with his hand behind his back and concealed under his coat; while the other urchin, small and wiry-looking, with his little hands clenched and his eyes blazing, stood like an infantile gladiator ready to spring on his antagonist and dare the worst, knife and all.

In a moment the policeman had each of them by the collar. In another instant he pulled the hand of the swarthy boy from underneath his coat, and wrenched from it a murderous-looking knife.

At the constable's approach the crowd of boys broke and scampered like rats on the appearance of their feline enemy; and, while he was wresting the knife from the swarthy boy, his late antagonist took advantage of the opportunity to regain his liberty, so that officer and captive were left alone.

The distance to the station was not far, and the officer carried off his little captive.

"Who gave you the black eye?" asked the officer, looking down from his six feet on the diminutive little man walking by his side.

"He give it ter me," answered the child, with a scowl that belonged to more mature years.

"And you came near killing him, and then you'd be hung."

"I'll give it ter 'im yet," hissed the boy through his clenched teeth.

"You're Italian, ain't ye?" queried the policeman.

"Noa, I wus borned in Greece."

"Ye're a Greek, are ye?" half soliloquized Mr. O'Callaghan, and immediately a secret sympathy sprang up in the mind of the captor for his captive.

Half-a-dozen thoughts now jostled each other through the constable's mind. His prospective paternity came upon him again, once more he saw the Græco-Irish scion of the O'Callaghan kicking his infantile heels in mid-air, and he softened toward Zoe's compatriot.

A thought came—he might be a brother of Zoe's, and this thought was voiced by the question, "What's yer name, my boy?"

"Petros; they calls me Pete for short."

"What's yer other name?"

"Zarouski."

That point was sattled. Was not Zarouski Zoe's name? They had almost reached the station when the officer suddenly turned round, saying to the boy. "Come along," and, walking through two or three streets, led his captive to his own lodging. Here he locked the door, and, putting the poor little urchin, who thought he was going to be tortured to death, in a seat opposite him, opened the ball thus: "Pete, do ye know what they'll do to ye there?" jerking his thumb in the direction of the Police Court.

"No," replied the lad, his short bare legs hanging down from the chair and six inches from the floor, while dismay was written on the face staring at his interlocutor.

"They'll send ye to a Reformatory School, where you'll have to work every day, get nothin' to eat, and be flogged every night."

The policeman winced at his own want of veracity, while the poor little fellow dropped his head on his breast in despair.

"You ain't a bad kid, are ye?" asked the constable.

"I ain't when I's left 'lone; I's bad when I's maddened," added the boy, candidly.

"Pete, I've took a likin' to ye," says the policeman. "and if ye promise not to hurt that boy that blacked yer eye, when ye meet 'im, I'll be yer friend, and ye won't go to the Reformatory School."

Pete didn't answer; it was not every day that people took a liking to him. He clutched his old rag of a hat tighter in his swarthy hands and the tears stood in his eyes.

"Now will you promise not to injure that boy?" queried the officer, with an assumption of that tone he had seen the police justice assume toward culprits. Still the child—child-man, rather—did not speak. He was doing his best to control the rising tears. He was afraid he would blubber out, and that, according to his code, would be unmanly.

"Well," queried the constable, "do ye promise?" The boy nodded his head, with a mass of black, unkempt hair on it, as a sign in the affirmative, and with a quick movement of his hand across his eyes managed to intercept a tear that in spite of his efforts escaped his eyelids. The policeman saw and was satisfied; then, addressing himself to the child, as if he was a full-grown man, and cheerily rubbing his hands, he said:

"Now, Pete, me boy, we'll have some dinner, you and me."

Very soon they were on the best of terms, and Pete would have gladly laid down his life for his new friend. He told O'Callaghan his little history.

But what interested the officer most was that Pete knew Zoe.

"Yes, I knows Zoe," said the little fellow, swelling with delight. "Zoe's been here on'y a little—about three months; her old fadder, he bought that stan' off a Italian feller, and Zoe runs it all her own self, she does."

The officer had early in their acquaintance determined to make use of Pete in declaring his love for Zoe, so that his friendship had a selfish motive, and was not at all so disinterested as was Pete's for him; so he took the little fellow entirely into his confidence, and the latter was as delighted at being able to do his great friend a favour as was the little mouse in the fable when it was given an opportunity to gnaw the meshes of the net that held entangled its great benefactor the lion. Perhaps the simile is a bad one in this case, as Pete was helping to entangle his friend in the meshes of a net, rather than to disentangle him.

The officer well knew that in the course he had determined on there were many difficulties to be overcome; he recognised the fact that it was a condition, not a theory, that confronted him, and taking a heroic resolve, determined to learn Greek; that is, he determined to learn enough Greek to pop the question in it, and Pete should be his teacher. It did not need many words, he soliloquized—one short sentence; and towards the production of this one great sentence our hero turned the full force of his great intellect; after covering, with a short stub of a pencil, quires of foolscap paper—why fool's-cap rather than any other kind of cap is not stated—he selected the following, more in despair of being able to do better than on account of its perfect fulness:

"Zoe, I love you. Do you love me in return?"

This was not such a bad sentence, our love-sick hero thought, as he surveyed it with his head first on one side and then on the other; and the author of this veracious history is inclined to agree with him and earnestly

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recommends it to young gentlemen in similar situations. Pete could put this gem of a sentence into pretty fair Greek, all but the words "in return"; what did that mean? he asked, and our hero replied, "Why, to love me in return means to love me back." Accordingly the sentence as Pete understood it read:

"Zoe, I love you; do you love me back?"

Now, Pete was a precocious child, and very bright in those things in which he had had experience; but a little knowledge of philology would have taught him there was such a thing as idiom in all languages, and that literal translation often gives a different and sometimes ludicrous meaning. But what he lacked in knowledge was made up in enthusiasm for his friend. He translated boldly like the reformation translators, and like them arrived at similar results. He knew no distinction between a noun and an adverb; so accordingly the adverb "back" he translated into a colloquial and somewhat slangy Greek noun meaning a "crooked back." Pete, instead of the personal pronoun "me," used the possessive adjective "my;" so that the sentence religiously committed to memory by Michael, instead of being "Zoe, I love you; do you love me in return?" read: 'Zoe, I love you; do you love my crooked back?"

At length the fateful sentence was learnt; and one bright morning in May, O'Callaghan, in his newest uniform, boldly marched toward Zoe and the apple-stand, with Pete closely following.

Zoe spoke to Pete in their own modern ungrammatical Greek, and to Michael in that language of the eyes where grammar cuts no figure. But this could not last always, and our lover, with his heart galloping all over his body, prepared for that terrible ordeal which it is said causes the bravest to tremble. Holding up in his hand a rosy apple so that passers-by would think he was asking the price, he repeated with terrible precision the sentence as he had learnt it.

Zoe did love him, and she said so in Greek so vehement and voluble that Pete, the would-be interpreter, did not understand more than every second word. She went on to say that she did love, and that she did not mind his poor crooked back the least bit. The words flitted by Pete so rapidly that he succeeded only in understanding and retaining the last sentence.

Judge of our hero's astonishment went Pete translated this back to him:

"She says she'll marry you, but she don't like your crooked back the least bit."

Zoe stood by, listening to Pete's English, her eyes beaming over with love. Now, laughter is closely akin to love, and for the first time our hero, in those Grecian orbs, saw only laughter; he was wounded in his most sensitive point, and that by her he loved. His beloved Zoe told him that indeed she would marry him, but she did not like his humpback the least little bit. With one reproachful glance at Zoe he turned and slowly walked away. Zoe saw the reproachful glance, and saw like the the soldiers at Balaclava, that "someone had blundered." Perhaps, she thought, he was going away, as he often did, because the passers-by were beginning to notice. Perhaps he would return.

Time rolled on calmly and inevitably as if nothing had ever happened to mar the happiness of two human beings. Time rolled on, and every morning Zoe burnished her apples with the same greasy rag, and always looked neat and trim, expecting him to return. She had learnt enough English now for all practical purposes. But he never returned. He is still single, somewhat more silent than he used to be, but a brave and faithful member of the force, and Zoe, with the blue-black hair that Michael admired so much, streaked with grey, is still the Grecian maiden of the apple-stand.

The moral of this story is; Never propose in a language you do not understand, and never employ Petros Zarouskis to interpret the reply. B. E. Drone.

THE WOLVES.

A dark December night—dark as the grave—a moaning storm, which congeals one's breath, freezes the blood in one's veins, and stirs up whole mountains of snow in front of it—heaven and earth amalgamated in an endless fog, an unlimited darkness, nowhere broken by so much as the twinkle of a light.

Even the lanterns of the fortress have been extinguished by the wind, which rushes through the midnight with an uproar like the howling and laughter of evil spirits. The redoubts and the rampart, the dry moat and the gates, are wrapped in gloom and silence.

The storm rages round the little guardhouse. It throws flying masses of snow against the thickly frosted windows, it sweeps across the roof, and ceases its clamour for a while, preparing for a new assault.

Inside, in the officers' room, the lieutenant on guard lies dreaming on the leather couch. His thoughts wander—far, far away from the fortress buried in the snow. The moaning and howling of the storm outside form the accompaniment to a vision which rises up before his mind,—a vision of sparkling lights, of sweet perfumes, and of soft dance music—and then, like another dream, the Nevski Prospect appears, filled with a noisy crowd, inundated by the bluish flood of electric lights, in the glare of which great snowflakes hover in gentle undulations to the ground. A sudden noise of heavy steps. The sergeant stands before him.

"Well, what is it?"

"I have to report to your honour that the cold is still increasing. The thermometer has gone down to 25 degrees."

"What's to be done, brother?" the lieutenant yawns "As it is, the sentries are relieved every hour."

"At your honour's service—but it's getting rather difficult at Post 5. The men just came back sweating as if they had been in a vapour-bath—they had to wade in snow up to their hips."

Post 5 was situated on a distant redoubt, which served as a powder-magazine. Directly in front of it was the river, now frozen to its lowest depths, which, on the other shore, gradually turned into a series of swamps. The latter were bounded, for miles round, by thick, undergrown woods.

"Well, they'll have to be patient to-night, that's all," said the officer. "Have you anything more to report?"

"Nothing, your honour."

"You may go, then."

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The relieved sentries had come back; they were stamping the snow from their waterproof boots, shaking it off their sheep-skin coats, and disentangling their bashliks from their ears and necks.

"Well, brothers, how do you like this weather?" asked one of the soldiers, a thickset fellow with bright eyes and a grin on his good-natured face.

"Wait till you're frozen—you won't feel like laughing then," growled another, as he hung his heavy sheepskin on a hook.

The others had approached the table, where one of their comrades sat reading aloud from a small volume entitled, "Soldier Life." The men formed a circle round him, their eyes fixed intently upon the lips of the reader, from which issued detached words:

"—And—then—they—went—through—with—such—a—manœuvre——"

As the newcomers stepped into the circle of light thrown by a small lamp shaded by a tin reflector, the reader stopped:

"Is it bad outside?" he asked.

"Vassili Petrovitch almost got frozen, at Post 6; the storm is awful, it even fills the sentry-box with snow. You can't get away from it."

"Will you stop talking!" cried the sergeant, looking up from his guard-book. "That's no more than your duty—it's what you swore to do."

The men remained silent. Nothing was heard but the roaring of the storm outside.

"What was that?" said one of them suddenly, in a low voice, "yonder from across the river——?"

"What was it?"

"Don't you hear it, brothers? It's wolves!"

The men looked at each other. Then one of them said, derisively:

"Wolves? Nonsense. It was nothing but the storm."

The first speaker insisted:

"It was the howling of wolves, nothing else. They are on the other side of the river, opposite the powder redoubt."

That was where Post 5 stood. Who was the next to relieve him? All looked at Pantkratieff, a young recruit, who rose from his seat with a look of dismay.

The men laughed as if to banish their own fears.

"You had better look out, the wolves will tear you to pieces."

One of the fellows went down on all fours, showed his teeth, and approached the recruit, uttering a low growl.

At this, however, the sergeant started up angrily:

"Be quiet!" he shouted, "or you'll be sorry. A nice way, this, to behave on guard. Quick, get the next relief ready."

The soldiers wrapped themselves in their sheepskins and bashliks, and seized their muskets. Their faces had grown graver as the foremost threw open the door. They were met by a cloud of whirling snow and an icy temperature as they stepped out. To their eyes, dazzled by the light, the darkness outside seemed impenetrable.

They groped their way out, bending forward and bracing themselves against the storm, and disappeared in the gloom.

"Halt? Who goes there?"

From somewhere in the moat the voice of Post 5 came out of the darkness—hoarse and indistinct for the snow-dust filled the mouth of everyone who attempted to call or shout.

The sentries were exchanged in silence. The one relieved groped and waded away with the others through the storm. The young recruit remained behind alone at Post 5.

He entered the sentry box, which, at least, sheltered him from the tempest if not from the cold. Inside, he sat down, and set his musket by his side in the deep snow which had drifted in through the door, and listened in silence to the chaos of sounds outside in the darkness.

What were they doing at home now? There was snow, plenty of snow there, too, in the lonely village of the steppe. The low cabins would be buried in it. It was hard work to dig a passage from the door to the street, and keep it open.

Well, what of that? Snow keeps you warm. And what a happy time they are having in the village now, in the winter season. They go from house to house, in disguise, to visit their neighbours; they skim, in their three-horsed sleighs, across the boundless, snow-covered fields; and inside the cabin, in the cosy living-room, dimly lit by a flickering lamp, two old people just at this hour are sitting opposite each other at table, thinking of him, and talking about him, while after having crossed themselves, they eat their supper.

The young recruit felt a lump rising in his throat—a deep feeling of home-sickness came over him, here in the midst of storm and darkness, and an unspeakable longing for his loved ones.

What was the good of thinking. He rose quickly and seized his musket, in order to leave the sentry-box, when, suddenly——

A long-drawn-out, piercing howl came out of the profound darkness just in front of him, and lost itself in a hoarse, low growl. From the rampart above a second, deeper voice responded, and from farther off, beyond the river, the fierce sounds were repeated in chorus.

The wolves!

The blood of the lonely sentry seemed to freeze in his veins. Involuntarily he leant against the wooden sentry-box, so as to protect his back. Then he cocked his musket, and stared out into the night as if he would have penetrated the darkness perforce. His heart beat in vehement throbs; he bent his head forward in order to catch the faintest sound that the wind might bear to him.

But all was quiet, perfectly quiet. The young fellow drew a deep breath. The minutes passed slowly. When would the relief come?

He felt a mad desire to leave his post and run to the guard-house as fast as his feet would carry him. But he knew his duty. He could not desert his post, he was obliged to stay, dead or alive, where the orders of his superior had placed him.

"The wolves are gone," he thought to himself "they only wanted to frighten me, and——"

There, nearer than before, the lugubrious howl, and, without delay, the answer from the rampart above. But no longer from a single wolf! No, that was the snarling and barking of the whole pack, which had crossed the river in the meantime.

Evidently the wind had given them the scent, and they knew that solitary man was standing there in the wintry night, a man whose hair rose up with horror under his lambskin cap, and who clasping his musket with trembling hands, stared up at the rampart.

There, on the ridge, where the snow had been blown away, crouched the pack. Their horrible yelping alternately grew louder and died away again, only to recommence after a long pause. Each time, in long-drawn-out tones, the bass of a veteran wolf rose above the rest of the hoarse chorus. He appeared to be the leader of the company, and to be far in advance of the others. It seemed as if his shadow were visible in the darkness

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—and now, suddenly, two phosphorescent green points flashed out directly in front of the recruit, and more piercing than ever, the howls from above recommenced.

He aimed and fired.

Like a clap of thunder the report reverberated through the moat—then, a despairing whine from the rampart, a whine which brought the yelping of the pack to a sudden end. Dark shadows flitted to and fro, there were sounds of snarling, gnashing of teeth, and crunching—the wolves in mutual combat, were tearing to pieces the carcase of their comrade who had been shot.

In the meantime the sentinel was reloading his musket. He had but one cartridge left. That used, he would be defenceless. He must save it till the last moment.

But there was no time to lose. He raised his musket. Shadowy forms approached him from all sides—greenish lights came flickering towards him—the horrible sounds drew nearer and nearer.

Just as he was about to fire, an indistinct mass detached itself from the dark background of the rampart. It sprang toward him, but missing him, struck the ground in front of him violently, seizing, as it did so, the sleeve of his coat, so that the old skin tore, and a piece of it fell to the ground with the wolf.

At the same time the musket discharged itself upward. The recruit swung it, still smoking, in the air, turned it about, and brought the butt, with all his force, down upon the ground beside him, before the wolf whose mouth was still filled with fragments of wool and skin, could prepare for a new attack. The butt struck something hard, and when Pankratieff lifted the musket, the beast remained motionless. Its backbone was broken.

But in another moment he felt something tugging vehemently at the musket, something which had fastened its greedy fangs in the barrel. The horde of yelping shadows darted at him, the green stars shone on every side—the wolves dug their teeth into his coat—he fell to the ground under their weight, with his face in the snow. The hot, fetid breath of the creatures was all about him—he felt them tugging and tearing at his coat—now it was beginning to give way.

Suddenly a bullet came whistling over the group—a flash lit up the darkness—shot on shot followed—the soldier lay alone. The wolves had receded a few steps, and stood in a semi-circle, growling and showing their teeth in indecision.

But they perceived that it was no single enemy who was approaching—it was a whole troop of armed men—and suddenly all was still. Silently the beasts crept and trotted away through the darkness.

The young recruit lay on the ground motionless. All around him were the fragments of his sheepskin coat; his bent musket lay beside him. He was alive, he breathed, and seemed uninjured. And soon he recovered consciousness, and realized that a detachment of his comrades, who had heard his shots in the guardhouse, had rescued him at the last moment.

They took him under the arms and led him along the moat back to the warm guardroom. Behind him several of the soldiers dragged along the wolves that had been killed—three gaunt, long-legged beasts.

After that the redoubt was deserted.

In an hour the wolves returned. They renewed their howling and snuffed and looked about for a victim. But nothing living stirred round about. They had accomplished one thing—Post No. 5 was not occupied again that night.

I. Metropski.

£250 * *

WILL BE GIVEN TO THE READER OF "SHORT STORIES" FROM WHOM WE RECEIVE A COUPON BEARING THE EXACT DAY UPON WHICH THE

British Flag will be Officially Hoisted in Pretoria.

ALL YOU HAVE TO DO.

Fill in the coupon below.

Send it in to us as soon as you like.

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If two competitors name the exact day the money will go to the one who gives the correct hour of that day. If two or more give the correct day and hour the £250 in full will go to him whose coupon we received bearing the earliest date of sending in. Pretoria time, which is about an hour and three quarters in advance of English time, must be stated.

The Editor's decision must be final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding.

The Editor reserves the right to close this competition at a day's notice.

Address all envelopes to "War Editor," Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C

Pretoria Coupon, S.S. *March 17, 1900.*

Name.....

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Day..... *Hour*.....

(Pretoria Time.)

We shall take it that competitors mean the year 1900 unless they state otherwise.

This notice and coupon also appears every week in the ILLUSTRATED WAR NEWS, HOME NOTES, SUNDAY READER, PEARSON'S WEEKLY, and the BIG BUDGET.

Readers of SHORT STORIES may enter with this Coupon.

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TWO WOMEN AND MR. JOHN ALLEN.

I AM a commercial traveller. I have been one for years, and possibly shall remain one to the end of my working days. But do not mistake me; there are grades of commercial travellers as much as in every other profession or business. Take banks, for instance. Once, when I was a youth, I knew a bank clerk. It was Groggs' Bank, and he worked early and late and got very little money. But look at the position he held. Trusted with thousands of pounds! My heart glowed when I spoke to him, and I felt I was the envied of all beholders when I was with him.

Then I met another bank clerk. He was in the Bank of England. Wishing to ingratiate myself with this new friend, I told him of Biggs, in Groggs'.

Now this Bank of England chap was tall and had a cast in one eye, but he brought them both to bear on me as he replied in a tone impossible (in its utter contempt) to reproduce on paper: "Where is Groggs' Bank?"

So you see there are grades as I said before, and by dint of hard work and inherent talent for commerce I may say I was one of the commercial travellers. I was known in all parts of the world. I never stayed anywhere for more than a flying visit. Yet somehow the eccentricities of China, the hurry and bustle of New York, the glitter and daintiness of Paris, and the sombre magnificence of the Californian forests never gave me that utter feeling of restfulness and home as did a ride on the outside of a Hammersmith 'bus in London!

By which remark you will see that I was born a Cockney, and every stone in the dear, dirty old place was worth as much as a Kimberley diamond to me.

I could have ridden in cabs, I could even have kept my carriage, like some of the others did, but somehow I never cared to. A 'bus I loved and a 'bus I would have.

On the particular evening on which my story begins I was on the Hammersmith 'bus smoking a pipe and staring down on the tops of the hats in Piccadilly.

It was just the most perfect evening in May, when London was at its fullest, and I puffed away, well content with all mankind.

Suddenly, I found my pipe wanted refilling, and I hadn't a match!

This did not disturb me much, because there are always smokers on a 'bus, so having filled up I turned to borrow a vesta off a neighbour.

Not a soul was smoking!

I reviled my luck and fingered the pipe lovingly. It was one given me by a friend out at the Cape, and I had a great regard for it.

The only vacant seat was next to me, and presently a young clean shaven man came and sat on it.

He wore his hat at a rakish angle, and, joy! was smoking a cigar.

So I borrowed a match off him, and we struck up an acquaintance. I soon found out he had travelled a bit, but seemed to know more of parts of New Zealand than elsewhere.

Then he told me he was purser on board a P. and O., and spent half his time here, and half at Sydney.

I took a fancy to him as soon as I saw him. There was that healthy, manly, shall I say breezy, way about him that so many sailors have, and he was nice-looking too, with curly hair and open grey eyes that looked you straight in the face with a merry twinkle in them that I liked. Altogether, Jack Allen was a man that anyone would trust on sight, and I would have staked any amount he was one who could neither tell a lie nor do a mean action, which only shows how easily you can be deceived in this world.

I borrowed a match off him and struck up an acquaintance.

We chatted on till we found a mutual friend. There is nothing like a mutual friend. It is true he was only a billiard marker in Boston, but he was a good sort, come down. Anyway,

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he was a mutual friend, and that was enough. By the time we had found him we had reached Hammersmith, and both got down and on to the Kew tram.

Allen was as full of spirits as a schoolboy, and kept drawing my attention to every pretty woman that passed.

Now, I am perilously near forty, and must confess have not much knowledge of that most complex puzzle—woman.

As a young man I had no time. Some young men will tell you they can get on better when they have a woman to care about, but don't you believe it. They are an enticing, conceited lot, and most expensive. That is for my young men readers. My father gave me this advice, and I took it when I got on a bit. Women folk, somehow, did not take much interest in me, so I got left again; so, as I say, I never had much opportunity of studying them. But, Allen! I don't think a girl passed our 'bus that he did not have a look at her. First this side and then that, till I had to tell him of it.

"I presume you are a bachelor, and that makes you so anxious to look at every face," I said sternly.

He reddened a little under the tan.

"Not I; I'm a married man, with the best and dearest wife any man had. But I always was the same—I love any and every girl I see!"

I felt mildly scandalised.

"What's more, I shall prove it to you, because I am going to take you home with me to-night, and you will meet Mrs. Allen and the baby. She'll be delighted, too, if you will stay to supper."

I stared a minute and then recollection came to my aid.

He was as good as his word, and we alighted at a small house covered with creepers just putting out their new green leaves. In front was a garden, with a large rose-tree in it, a fact which interested me at once. Always devoted to flowers, I hold the rose as the queen of the garden, and it is my firm belief that to graft a wild double cherry on to a white—but, then, I forgot myself for the moment. This is not a treatise on roses. Mrs. Allen opened the door to welcome us, and unaffectedly kissed her husband, while she held the prettiest little baby out of harm's way under her arm.

I own, then, for the first time in my life, I should think, I realised I had lost something, and the mental picture of my comfortless and desolate lodgings came vividly before my eyes.

Mrs. Allen—her name I heard was Mary—was a *petite* fair woman, with a trustful nature and a sweet pretty face, and one of the loveliest babies I have ever met. Her name was Marjorie, and my heart went out to her at once. Some old bachelors have weaknesses—mine is a pretty baby.

We spent a very happy evening, and I left the Allens' house with regret; but not before I had received an invitation to come again, which I eagerly accepted, and a kiss from Marjorie.

After that I met the Allens many times. Through having no settled home I had many acquaintances, but few friends, and I found the little house at Kew more to my liking than the most gilded saloon bar in the West-End.

Mrs. Allen, too; how kind she was to me. There was nothing that little woman would not do; from mending my gloves to letting me help her transplant the rose tree.

In fact, at length, when Allen's leave was up and he went to rejoin his ship, I found myself, to my great consternation, thinking more of my friend's wife than I considered strictly in accordance with the views of society. The shock was so great to me, that on making the discovery I started at once for Paris, for I knew that there is no fool like an old fool.

From there I drifted onwards, and by degrees the little house at Kew faded from my memory, and was put away among the recollections of the past in the back of my brain somewhere. I had been to Japan, and thence to China, and after several months found myself in sun-baked Sydney. The leaves on the trees of the side walk were glimmering in the blaze of the sun, and unable to bear the glare, I stepped aside into a doorway that was nicely shaded and so looked less roasting than the others.

The door was open and the blinds of the house down. There was a kind of seat in the doorway, and I sat down upon it, too hot to go any further.

Suddenly, from the interior of the house, loomed a familiar figure. I stared a moment, and then recollection came to my aid.

It was Jack Allen!

I grasped his hand effusively, and felt as glad as possible to have met him, but somehow his greeting struck me as not so enthusiastic as I might have liked.

He seemed almost to be annoyed at meeting me.

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"Well," I mused, "it is often so—out of sight out of mind."

"I was so hot, old chap, I took refuge on this seat, without a notion as to whose it was. How have you been?" I said, mopping my face.

"Well, very well, thanks. How are you?"

"And how's your wife?" Even then I hesitated over this question. I saw a distinct look of fear come into the man's eyes.

"She is quite well—indoors," he said slowly.

"Your wife here?" I cried. "Well, that is good. I should like to meet her."

"Yes, yes!" he said nervously. "But if you're rested we'll just step over to my office first—over that little business I told you of!"

And he ended his sentence in a loud key, as if for the benefit of someone inside.

"Certainly, certainly!" I replied vaguely, and, putting on my hat, "the sooner the better."

"Yes," said Allen in a low voice, "the sooner the better."

Feeling a mystery was in the air, yet quite unable to find the drift of it, I followed the young fellow down the baking street.

Suddenly he stopped and faced me.

"Can I trust you, Carter?" he said.

"My dear fellow, I am sure you can," I answered.

"Well, it's like this. I never expected to meet you out here, or I might have been prepared for it. But here you are, and I am not the man to cut a friend, no matter what I fear; but my wife, whom you will see when I go home with you, is not the one you met in London!"

I own I was rather dumfounded. With such a wife as Mary, here was this man living——

"Don't mistake me," he said, cutting my meditation short. "I love both women as truly as ever man did. You know I am capable of loving half creation. I love them both, and—Heaven help them!—they love me. I have married them both, and I am true and straight to them. Half my time I spend out here with Helen, half I spend in London with Mary. Two dearer girls never lived on this earth—and hanging is too good for me."

I felt really sorry for the young fellow. He was evidently so distressed.

"What an awful thing to have done!" I said. I could not help it. To think the man I believed as upright as myself was a bigamist!

"Of course, neither knows of the other," I said.

"Neither; each thinks she has my whole heart. I am heavily insured both out here and at home—one policy for her, one for Mary. I have done everything I can, but the life I lead is awful sometimes. Look what I have hanging over my head!"

"Yes, if they found it out they could inform against you."

"That wou'dn't matter. It would come out then that one was my wife and one not. The shock to my wife to find I had been faithless would be bad enough—but Heaven help the one who found she was no wife at all!"

We stood still in the sunshine. I did not know what to say.

"But come back, Carter. Helen will be pleased to see you, and the twins"—here he hesitated, and, I was glad to see, changed colour—"are ripping; you'll like them. But, remember, Helen's and Mary's peace of mind is more to me than my life—so I will trust you."

As much out of curiosity as anything, I went back, and was introduced to Mrs. Allen. She was a tall, slight girl, with a pale, oval face and scarlet lips, and her dark hair parted in the centre and covering her ears.

Novice as I was in woman's looks, I could not help but acknowledge that Allen had remarkable taste, and evidently liked a contrast, as nothing could have been wider apart in appearances than these two wives.

The twins, as he said, were ripping—two strapping boys of three years, with all the manly ways of their erring father and the beauty of their mother.

As I walked home that night I found myself wondering who was the wife and who wasn't, and somehow I hoped *she* wasn't. My sympathies were with the little girl in England. She had not the spirit of the Australian, and I felt sure the knowledge would kill her, were she ever to find out the truth.

I did not stay long in Sydney, as my business was soon done, so taking a berth in the first ship I arrived in London some time before Allen, whose boat was the next but two after mine.

Instinctively, I was drawn towards Kew. I put it down to my fancy for the Hammersmith Road bar, but in my heart of hearts I knew better.

Mary was pleased to see me, and told me how dull she had been.

"That's the worst of having a husband like Jack. You only see him half the time, the other half he is away goodness knows where, and up to goodness knows what! Not that I don't trust him. My Jack is as true as the day, I know, but really, a friend who knew him out in Sydney said he could easily have a wife out there and I should never know it; and really, Mr. Carter, so he might."

I felt I could break the head of the "friend" who said such a thing, but I only laughed.

I went back and was introduced to Mrs. Allen.

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"Yes; and you know what a man he is for pretty girls, don't you?" she added, laughing at the joke, whilst I felt a cold shiver run through me to hear her speak thus.

"Now you've seen him latest, Mr. Carter, how many wives had he got when you saw him?"

"Only about four," I answered easily.

She clapped her hands.

"Wait till he comes back, I'll tell him what you say."

"For goodness' sake don't," I said in consternation. "He might not like it."

"Oh, Jack is the best fellow in the world, he'll think it a great joke. By-the-bye, you haven't seen Marjorie, have you?"

And the rest of the evening passed away very pleasantly.

It must have been a year after this when I received a telegram in Paris from London, which ran:

"Come at once, Mary!"

I read the missive through twice wondering what she, who was scarcely ever out of my thoughts, should send thus urgently for me.

Was Marjorie, my dear little girl as I call her, ill, dead, perhaps! But no, a second idea came into my mind, and came to stay.

She had heard of Helen!

Hastily concluding my business, I came home and drove straight to the little house at Kew.

The blinds were up, and inside, the gas, unprotected by any globe, flared in the evening breeze. Straw and paper littered the garden path, and a large van stood at the door. The house was open and I stepped in. Ready dressed, with her veil turned up over her little black bonnet, stood a ghost of my pretty Mary. Her face was white, and great rings surrounded her sweet grey eyes, that were filled even now with tears.

I came forward and took her hands in mine.

"Poor child," I said, seeing how broken she was.

"Mary," I said, taking her hands in mine, "will you trust me?"

"You know?" she asked, looking pitifully round.

"I guessed what it was."

"Have you known all this time?"

"Partly, not all."

"Oh, good Heaven, to think all these years I have never been his wife!"

"You have never been his wife?" I said, starting forward.

She shook her head most sadly.

"No, he married—her—first, and then met me. Oh, my poor Jack, and how I love you still!"

"Where are you going?" I asked, unable to say more on so painful a subject.

"I am going to stay with my sister for a while—goodness knows what will become of me afterwards. Look at me. Worse than that—look at Marjorie!"

I own I thought the future very dark for the poor girl.

"Mary," I said taking her hands in mine once more. "Will you trust me—I will be a good husband to you for ever and ever—I know I am no girl's fancy and am not much to look at, but I love you dearly, Mary."

She was silent a moment. Then she said:

"I couldn't—oh, I couldn't—I love him so much, I could never love anyone else in this world."

"I do not ask it," I said. "Marry me and I will make you a good husband. I know you can't love me. I am not worth loving. But you like me and I love you, and Marjorie shall be my little girl."

* * * * *

"And a better husband no girl ever had—and I certainly never deserved——"

Mary has just written this and insists on my leaving it in—so I have done so. You can judge for yourself if you know us.

Errol Stanhope.

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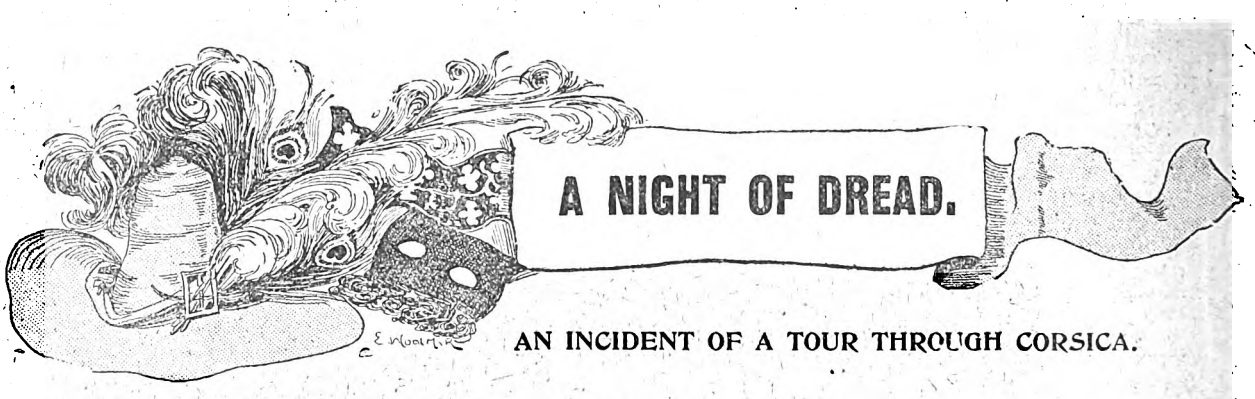

A NIGHT OF DREAD.

AN INCIDENT OF A TOUR THROUGH CORSICA.

DOWN a long stony valley in the Corsican mountains two men were riding bicycles. They were Americans and were "doing Europe." Among other things, they had thought a bicycling tour in Corsica the correct thing to do; but half way through they very much wished they had not undertaken it. At the large towns of Ajaccio, Bastia and Corte they could get very good food and accommodation but the country inns were simply impossible, and ought not to have been called inns at all. Some black bread and a skinny chicken, killed while they waited, was their usual fare; no butter, no milk, no meat.

"What on earth do they live on themselves?" said Adolphus E. Ward to his friend, "they look healthy enough, too."

"Oh, stuff made of pounded chestnuts, I believe," said Henry Cardew, who was short and fat, "let's try it."

So they did, but soon repented, the chestnut polenta required an apprenticed taste. Down the stony ravines of the mountains, the principal roads were fairly good, they put up woodcock in several places and much regretted the guns they had left at Nice. Once a savage looking old boar charged across the road just in front of them, and disappeared among the maquis and arbutus bushes on the left. In the early mornings the wild myrtle of the maquis scented the air and attracted clouds of birds, who grew fat on the berries. They had a chart of all the cycleable roads in Corsica, and the stopping-places possible to sleep in, clearly marked, so there was no danger of losing their way.

It was December, the best month for an expedition of this kind. They had first crossed over from Nice to Ajaccio; it had been a very stormy night and for several hours the little steamer had to lay to, in case the force required to breast the waves should break her single screw. Henry Cardew had been very sea-sick indeed, and the French third class passengers of which there had been a great many on board, had howled and shrieked as if their last hour had surely come, and so no doubt they thought it had.

However, a few hours later than their advertised time they sighted the jagged edges of the Iles Sanguinaires, and after rounding them the rough water was left behind and they steamed up the lovely Bay of Ajaccio in comparatively smooth water. Then they just stayed two days in Ajaccio to recover their internal balance and also to enjoy the good living and comfort of the Continental Hotel. Then they started along the good road that crosses the Island to Bastia, and found it very hard work, for quite half way, it is a continued ascent, up to the snow line near Vizzavona. After that the road slopes easily down again to the Plains. The afternoon we saw the two bicyclists was a dull grey one worthy of England and her fogs and mist; no sign was to be seen of the brilliant sunshine of the Mediterranean islands, all was dull stone colour. They stopped at mid-day to eat the lunch packed in their knapsacks, and drink the whisky in their flasks.

"By Jove, I'm tired," said Cardew to his friend, "I don't know how it is, but you long skinny fellows can take much more exercise without getting so done up as fellows like me."

"Train a bit," said Adolphus, peaceably. "You're a long way too fat, my dear boy. By the way, just take out the map and see how much farther we've got to go to-day."

Harry Cardew took out the map and studied it carefully.

"There's a little place called Cuchilla only four miles off," he said at last, "and it has a house that calls itself a hotel, I see."

"Oh, they all do that out here," said Adolphus, "that doesn't count for much. Still, if it's marked on that chart at all, it must be fit to sleep in. I'm feeling rather tired, too, and I propose we go no farther than Cuchilla to-day, and put up there for the night."

Harry Cardew agreed, but as they had so short a way to go, they dawdled about where they were for some time longer and it was getting dark before they mounted their bicycles and went down the steep valley to Cuchilla.

"There are rather a rough lot of people in some of these out of the way Corsican places, you know," said Adolphus E. Ward, "a man in a shop at Ajaccio told me the brigands were by no means extinct in the country places."

"Well, we can't help it if the place is stuffed with them," said Harry Cardew stolidly, "brigands or no brigands, I don't go a yard further to-night if I know it. I'm thoroughly beat."

Just then two or three scattered houses came in sight; on a signboard on the right Bureau de Poste was written up, outside a kind of shed, and across the road was a house of three storeys high.

"This must be Cuchilla," said Harry Cardew, "look, there's a board of some kind over the door only it's so dirty, one can't read what's written on it."

They got off their bicycles before the entrance, unnoticed by anything but two pigs who were grubbing about, close to the step, and some goats and chickens, who evidently lived in the rooms on the ground floor.

"So do the pigs, I suppose," said Harry Cardew meditatively.

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"Pigs do what?" said his friend, who was unstrapping his tool bag from the back of his seat.

"I say I suppose the pigs live in the hotel too," said Harry Cardew, disgustedly, "and the goats and the fowls."

"Of course they do," said his friend briskly, "good sign, if there are fowls there must be eggs about. Bang the door, there's a good chap.'

Harry Cardew obediently banged the door, but without getting any answer, then, as on looking in, they saw nothing but a stone cellar and a staircase leading up to the floor above, they left their bicycles below and ascended it. On the first floor they heard a sound of voices, so they again knocked at one of the doors. This time an old woman appeared and made signs to them to come into the kitchen, where there was a table in front of a large wood fire, with bottles of red country wine on it and several rough looking men sitting round.

One man came forward, evidently the proprietor of the inn, who could speak something more like French than the usual Corsican *patois*, and after some feeble remarks in bad French, the Americans made him understand they wanted supper and two beds for the night and a place in which to stand their machines. This last request evidently puzzled their host very much, so they went downstairs with him and brought up the bicycles to the first floor, where he put them in a little parlour off the kitchen. Then he took the two young men up another flight of stairs to a poor looking attic with two beds.

"All right," said Harry Cardew, "this must do whether we like it or not, and now ask him if he can get us something fit to eat."

Adolphus was the spokesman always and he rather enjoyed showing off his superior French, which, as a matter of fact, was very feeble indeed. He asked for water to wash their hands in before dinner, a request which the man evidently thought very unreasonable. However after a long interval of waiting, he re-appeared with a broken lipped jug of water and one very small basin, but no towel.

"However one can't expect too much at one go," Harry Cardew remarked as he dried his hands on his pocket handkerchief.

Then they went downstairs again to the kitchen and were offered very hard black bread and some stewed meat, off what animal it was impossible to determine.

"I should say a hard worked donkey," said Adolphus E. Ward, pensively, as he vainly tried to saw bits off the steak.

"I think it's goat myself," said Harry Cardew, "and died of some disease probably, I shall keep to the bread and cheese. The cheese isn't half bad, it's like the red American sort at home."

Being young and hungry they made a fairly good meal off the food set before them; the other men looked on sullenly and left soon after they came in, one by one.

"I don't much like the look of our host, do you, Harry?" said Adolphus, in a low tone.

"Not particularly," said the youth, calmly, "but what's the odds? We have two beds and we leave here tomorrow morning. Come let's go to bed now, I'm jolly tired."

So they picked up the oil lamp from the table and wishing their host a civil good-night, to which he responded only by a grunt, they went upstairs. There was no fastening to their door, so they moved one of the bedsteads against it, undressed and went to bed, and were soon fast asleep. The night went on, as nights usually do.

Adolphus E. Ward was a light sleeper and he suddenly woke up with the acute feeling we all have had sometimes, that someone was near. Creak, creak, stealthily some footsteps were creeping up the stairs. By stretching out one long leg, he was able to kick his companion in the face, an attention by no means appreciated and which occasioned some low toned remarks, unfit for publication. But just then Harry Cardew also heard the creaking footsteps, and they both sat up and seized their boots, their only weapons of defence. The steps stopped outside their door.

"One at least must be killed," said a whisper, in a man's gruff voice, carefully subdued.

"It is a pity," said in French, another person, a woman, "but yes, it is necessary."

"Which say you, the long and thin one, or the little fat?"

"The long and thin," was the answer, "he will give the greater profit."

"I say the little fat," said again the woman's whisper.

("Blood hirsty brute," muttered Harry Cardew.)

"But why not both," said the man, "it is easy, they are both asleep, one screw of the neck and it is finished."

"Ah, Joseph," sighed the woman, "it is murder, but yes, I will do it—softly, they stir."

Then the steps crept away from the door. Adolphus E. Ward and Harry Cardew sat on their beds, boots in hand, awaiting the murderous attack, from what side they knew not, perhaps the wall on one side was hollow, perhaps there was a hidden door, who could tell? So they sat there waiting till the faint blue-bell tints of morning crept up the Eastern sky. Still they did not dare to sleep, perhaps from a hole in the wall their enemies were watching for their opportunity.

Yet nothing happened. At eight o'clock they put their boots on their feet and boldly walked down the stairs. The proprietor's wife, a young woman they had not seen the night before, came forward, and smilingly said breakfast would soon be ready.

"Look out for poison" said Harry Cardew gloomily, "it was her whispering last night."

They waited in the little parlour off the kitchen. The sun shone, the pigs squeaked cheerfully outside. Soon the proprietress came in, bearing in triumph on a dish on which reposed the skinny carcase of an ancient fowl.

"There, messieurs," she said proudly, "is he not fine? My husband would have killed rather the young one, but there is more flavour in this. Last night we discussed the matter at length before deciding he must be slaughtered. Ah, my dear friend Coco," she added affectionately, "never shall I hear you cackle again."

Ward and Cardew looked at each other rather shamefacedly and then burst out laughing.

"You killed him in the night, Madame?" said Adolphus.

"But yes," she sighed, "he slept in the loft near your room, poor cherished one, he slept, and with one screw of the neck his life was gone. We feared to disturb messieurs, but no doubt, fatigued, you slept well."

"Oh, yes, thanks, we slept very well indeed," said Harry Cardew hastily. "I say Adolphus Ward, you are a flat."

But Adolphus E. Ward made no answer, he was masticating the defunct Coco. SADI GRANT.

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Briton or Boer?

By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

INTRODUCTION.

For years past Britain and the Transvaal have been spoiling for a fight, and it was left to that well-known author, Mr. George Griffith, to write this strong and exciting serial nearly four years ago graphically describing a huge war between the two countries.

The story, coming so soon after the Jameson Raid, was read with unusual interest.

Now that Briton and Boer are in deadly conflict it will be interesting to read the story, and see how far the imagination of the author has actually come true.

SUMMARY OF OPENING CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.—The scene opens on the Rand. It is the eve of Amajuba day, and a State ball is being given. To this comes Prince Paul Rexna, a Polish nobleman, and his daughter, Princess Vavara. They are introduced to Dr. Leyds.

CHAPTER II.—Dr. Leyds returns to Pretoria to attend a midnight consultation at the Government buildings. The Prince's rooms are in the Grand Hotel opposite. By tapping the wires, which cross the street at this point, the Prince and his daughter overhear all that goes on, and telegraph the result by secret code to Europe.

CHAPTERS III. AND IV.—Amajuba day dawns. The Secretary accompanies the Prince and Princess to Krugersdorp where, from the base of the Monument of Independence, the President makes a great proclamation. The Convention of London is abrogated, the absolute independence of the South African Republic is declared; the President unfurls a Union Jack and rends it to pieces. So the storm bursts!

CHAPTERS V. AND VI.—On the following day Major-General Carrington learns at Buluwayo that all the wires have been cut between Rhodesia and the south and east. He concludes that this is due to Boer hostility, and prepares to meet it. Meanwhile a powerful British squadron appears unexpectedly in Delagoa Bay, and Lieutenant Ferris is sent ashore to take possession of the telegraph station.

CHAPTERS VII. AND VIII.—A Russian squadron is in the Bay at the same time. The flagship *Navarin* fires on the British destroyer *Thrasher*. Admiral Dale takes this as an act of war. There is a battle and the Russian squadron is defeated and captured. Michael Ostroff seeks to escape in the *Sokol*. He is taken prisoner, and important dispatches are found in his possession. Admiral Dale calls a council of war.

CHAPTER IX.

ROUNDING UP THE REBELS.

"Bust me, Jack, if old Fighting Fred hasn't got the niggers this time! Lawd love us, did you see that shell? plumb centre in the middle of the impy! Good old B Battery! That's the place to put 'em. Let her go! There's another on the left horn, and another, and another. Gawd, 'ow they serve those guns! Hope the beggars don't do a guy before we can get a chance at 'em."

"Shut up, you blighted idiot! If your eyes were as wide open as your mouth is you'd see the vermin crawling round the shoulder of that kopje. Look! Up yonder to the left! Ah! Got him in once. Take the next, Ned; see what they mean? They want to get behind us. Good! The other chaps 've got on to them. Steady and straight, lads, and we'll show them how to turn the flank of the 'K' boys. Put yer head down, Mike, you bally idiot; what were rocks made for? Lawd he's got it! I'll bet my old barker to a peashooter no kaffir ever fired that shot. There, take that and go home you blacked-up Dutchman."

"Well shot, Jacky boy! Six hundred yards if it was an inch! Those bally Boers won't have much to teach us in the shooting line when we do meet 'em. That chap never kicked before he dropped. Ah! Good again! See the rock fly! That shell was as good as six, and that's what the Boers 'll find out when they get lying down beyond the stones and thinking that we're going to run up to them and get shot down like sheep, like those poor chaps at Laing's Nek did. Seven pounder melinites at four thousand yards is what they want, and by the Great Scoop, they'll get 'em."

"Hope so, sure, Ned. There'll be more sport in it, anyhow, than this nigger-hunting, and it's coming soon, too, for this game won't last much longer. Freddy's got 'em this time. They never thought they were going to get anything like this rush through the mountains and bein' jammed up in a mantrap like this. Good old screw-guns! That's the way. See 'em scatter down the kopje with the rocks after 'em. I thought so! Right down to the veld! Let 'em go! Sharpshooting made easy! Hooray! There goes the bugle! Put on the toasting-forks. Bullet and bayonet is the word now, Ned. Down we go!"

The foregoing conversation took place seven days after the news of the cutting of the wires had come to Buluwayo, between Troopers John Hinton and Edward Dempsey of Macfarlane's "K" troop of horse as they lay side by side behind a sheltering ridge of stones on the slope of a hill a little to the north of the Nuanetzi river down towards the angle where the river and the old Pioneer Road join at Nuanetzi township.

The hills here meet in a somewhat sharp curve, and about midway between the two ranges there is a kopje, or isolated hill, which Sir Frederick Carrington, or "Fighting Freddy," as his men affectionately termed him when out of ear-shot, had purposely left unoccupied, when, after six days hard marching and skirmishing, he had hunted the Matabele and their Mashona allies out of their retreats in the Matoppo hills and driven them down, mile by mile, into the *cul de sac* between the Nuanetzi and the Lundi which he intended to be the final scene of the war so far as the rebel kaffirs were concerned.

He had left one road, and one only, open—that which led through a chain of hills that ran from north-east to south-west across the plain. They had passed through this by night unmolested and confident of forcing their way over the Pioneer Road and into the wild Amaduna country beyond, but when morning dawned they found the hills lined with sharpshooters and every outlet guarded by the terrible little "loud-speakers" and the long "big-talkers," and it was just after sunrise on this particular morning that Troopers Hinton and Dempsey exchanged sentiments to the accompaniment of the cracking of rifles, the "spat-

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spat" of the bullets on the stones, and the bang and whistle and crash of the shell-fire, about half-an-hour after "the circus had opened," as Trooper Dempsey put it.

The Matabele, seeing themselves surrounded, had instinctively fallen back into their old formation, and were preparing to rush the hills to the eastward, feeling that there, and there alone, lay their only chance of escape. There were between ten and twelve thousand of them, and as the bugle rang out they had formed up under the shelter of the isolated kopje, and were swinging out in their crescent-shaped formation round the shoulder of the hill, fairly well covered by the brushwood.

The last notes had scarcely died away when every man of the "K" troop had loosed the knee-halter of his horse and was picking his way down through the stones, with the bridle on his left arm and his rifle lying across it, ready for instant use. Across the valley they could see other men and horses picking their way down, and stopping every now and then, as they did, to take a chance shot at a black shape crawling among the rocks, or to reply in kind to a bullet that came singing out of a cloud of smoke behind a stone.

Then when they reached practicable ground the halt was called, and every man stood by his horse ready to shoot or ride as the order might come. Meanwhile, the long brown crescent of the Matabele warriors, alive with plumes and waving spears, and guns and shields, was swinging round the base of the kopje to the left, and flowing in a torrent of desperate valour towards the slopes of the eastern hills, and to the right of the kopje another line, some twelve or fifteen hundred strong, was moving up the valley to intercept the threatened charge of the troopers.

"It'll be half-a-dozen volleys and up an' at 'em, Ned, you see."

"Yes, bayonet and pepper-box against assegai and shield, and pretty warm work it'll be, too, when we get to close quarters, for those black devils mean do or die this time, seeing it's get through or kingdom come for them—if they have a kingdom come."

"That's it, Jack. Here comes Mac. Thought so! Six volleys and shoot low, then mount *and* at 'em. Good-bye, Jacky boy, if I don't see you again. Remember me at home if you get there and I don't. This is going to be a blazing hot half-hour."

"By-bye, Ned, and do the same for me if I get an assegai between the ribs and you don't. O reservoir, old man! Now then, let her go and shoot straight, and don't aim at the same nigger as me. We've no lead to waste."

The two chums shook hands.

The two chums shook hands, as many another pair of good chums did about the same time, for, as Trooper Hinton had remarked, the next half-hour or so bade fair to be blazing hot. The Matabele outnumbered them some six to one, and were coming on as though they meant business. When they were about twelve hundred yards away the long rifle-barrels dropped across the saddles, and the fire and smoke began to spurt from the muzzles up and down the line across the valley.

At the first discharge the Matabeles stopped, and about a fourth of them threw themselves upon the ground, and flashes of flame jumped up from among the grass, and bullets came singing and hissing over the troopers' heads. Then they sprang up and made another rush forward, ann again the rifles spoke—this time with better effect thad before, for some of those who lay down didn't get up again.

The bayonets drove through the tough shields.

Then for four more rounds it was load and fire as fast as aim could be taken, then, almost as one man, troops "K," "G," and "F," swung up into the saddle, the bugle sang out its message, and, with revolver in the left hand and bayoneted rifle in the right, they raced away in a long, close line on to the solid advancing mass of the Matabele.

They were met with wonderful coolness and steadiness — a coolness and steadiness which betokened something better than native drill and discipline. The three or four hundred who were armed with rifles ran out in front of the line, dropped to the ground when they were about three hundred yards off, and let go a volley that emptied a score of saddles and wounded twice as many horses. Then the rest charged forward over the prostrate bodies, swinging their spears and waving their shields.

At twenty yards the spears began to fly and the revolvers to crack, and then footmen closed with horsemen; the short, heavy-headed stabbing assegai clove its way into the breasts and flanks of the rearing, screaming horses, and the weighted bayonets drove down through the tough shields, and through bone and muscle behind them. The dusky braves clutched at bridle and mane and ears, and by sheer weight and strength dragged many a horse to its knees and rolled many a rider on the grass never to get up again.

But at last the deadly six-shooters and the swift-stabbing bayonets did their work, and the troopers began to forge ahead. Little more than three-fourths of their number got clear on the other side of the dusky line, but they re-formed in an instant, loaded their rifles, poured a point blank volley from the saddle into the broken-up masses of the Matabele, and then charged in again, this time riding clear through them.

Then to their rear from the eastward there came the sharp thudding roar of the Maxims, the dull banging of the seven-pounders and the shrill crash of the bursting shells. At the familiar but dreaded sound the Matabele wavered for a moment, and then broke and run, only to be ridden down and bayoneted and shot by the now infuriated troopers. But the maxim bullets and the shells were not for them. The main impi had by this time reached the foot of the eastern hill-slope and was making a gallant but useless stand against the storm of fire and hail of lead that was raining down upon them.

"Halt, lads, and see to the wounded for a bit. You'll not be wanted yet," Captain Macfarlane shouted as he rode along the straggling line of panting horses and powder-blackened, blood-bespattered men. "Let the Maxims get their work in, and then we'll take them in the rear."

Then the line broke up, and men went to look for dead and wounded chums and comrades, and do what they could for those who could still be helped. Dead horses were pulled off the crushed limbs of wounded men; others, kicking and writhing on the ground, got a revolver bullet under the ear to end their misery; limp, blood-stained forms were lifted tenderly by strong, gentle hands, and carried away to the shade; water-bottles were unslung,

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and flasks came out, and presently field-surgeons came galloping up with splints and bandages, and so the work of healing and friendship went on to the strange accompaniment of the grim music of death until the roar of the guns began to slacken.

Then the bugle sounded again, rifles and revolvers were loaded, and every man who could ride got back into the saddle, the line was re-formed, and with a last glance backwards at the dead and wounded, the troopers trotted down the valley and round the left shoulder of the kopje. As they rounded it a frightful scene came into view. Of the eight or ten thousand Matabele who had made up the impi that had charged the fatal slopes, scarcely half were left alive, the rest lay scattered about, bullet-riddled and shell-mangled on the bloody grass, amidst the splintered trees and brushwood. Those left alive were making for the kopje at the top of their speed, as the General had intended they should before the battle began.

Suddenly the firing stopped altogether, the bugles sang out again, and a long straggling line of nearly twelve hundred horsemen, composed of companies of Mounted Infantry, Hussars, Lancers, Cape Mounted Rifles, Cape Boys, and the Rhodesia Horse—which, true to time, Sir Richard Martin had brought down from Salisbury by the Victoria road—rode out of the trees amidst which the Maxims and seven-pounders had been planted, and, forming up into their respective squads, charged with lance and bayonet and revolver into the midst of the flying Matabele.

Trooper Hinton nursing a leg that had an assegai driven into it.

At the same moment troops "K," "G," and "F" swung round their flank, cutting off their way of escape to the plain.

Some turned and died in a fashion well worthy the blood of the old Amazulu, stabbing and clubbing and dragging men from their horses, and bringing their kerries down on their heads with the last effort of their lives; but most of them ran for the shelter of the trees on the kopje as fast as their legs would carry them, flinging their arms and shields away as they went.

At the foot of the kopje the pursuit stopped, for even "Fighting Freddy" had no heart to shed more blood than was necessary; so the bugle sounded the halt, and the different companies were divided into squads and picketed within sight of each other all round the hill, and the Maxims were brought down and posted so as to sweep all its lower slopes. Lastly, the mountain batteries that had been brought with infinite labour from Buluwayo were run out and placed in conspicuous positions as a gentle hint to the Matabele that, unless they surrendered pretty promptly, means might be taken to persuade them.

"I hope these black beggars 'll see things in a reasonable and natural way," said Trooper Dempsey to his chum about midday, when all the arrangements had been made, and they had finished comparing casualties. "We don't want to stop here a week, you know. Those ain't the chaps we've got to fight. It's them 'airy-faced, unwashed, biltong-chewin' sons of guns down yonder, and every hour we're kept here the stronger they'll be gettin' on the frontier, bust 'em!"

"Yes, that's so, old man," replied Trooper Hinton, tenderly nursing a leg that had had an assegai driven about three inches into it. "Our work ain't here now; it's down yonder, and thundering hard work it's going to be, you believe me."

"You can bet your ugly face on that! Give us a fill and pass your flask; mine's empty."

CHAPTER X.

A Black Dutchman.

The afternoon passed away without any further incident than the ordinary operations of camp life under the given conditions. The dead were buried in the valley with all due honours, the wounded were cared for in the field hospital that had been promptly established. Men with lighter hurts got them made comfortable, weapons were cleaned, artillery overhauled, camp kitchens made ready, and all due preparations made for a "blooming picnic," as Private James Anson, of the 17th Lancers, better known as "Jumping Jimmy," from his extraordinary activity, tersely put it.

His right fist shot out from the shoulder.

But if it was a picnic to the men, it was anything but that to the officers. On the contrary, it was a most anxious time, for during the six days' campaign rumours had kept flying up from the South with that marvellous rapidity of transmission which is characteristic of all higher savage races, and all these were substantially to the same effect—white men armed with long guns and dragging "little loud-speakers" and "big-talkers" with them were coming up from the south and taking possession of the drifts, or river-fords, occupying the most difficult parts of the road, and, worse than all, creeping up on Puri and towards the Mangwe Pass.

There could be no doubt now who they were, for they could be none other than the Boers; but there all certainty ended.

Had there been a formal declaration of war, or were the Boers doing as they did at Bronkhurst Spruit in 1881, when they murdered sixty-nine, and severely wounded eighty-three, unarmed men of the 94th regiment as they were marching into Pretoria with unloaded rifles and ammunition screwed up in the boxes on the waggons?

Was the Imperial Government alive to the situation, and sending troops from England and India, or would it wait for another Laing's Nek and Amajuba before the Empire put forth its strength? Or had the secret treaty with Germany which Dr. Leyds had brought back with him from Berlin, when he went to have his throat seen to, come into effect, and, if so, was England so far embroiled in complications at home that she could send no adequate aid to the loyalists of South Africa?

They woke up Trooper Hinton.

These were the questions which, with many a one like them, were anxiously debated by the leaders of the little

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force on the Nuanetzi as they lay round the kopje waiting for the rebels to surrender. It was true that matters might have been hastened by shelling the woods and rocks, but in view of the work that was to be done, there was no ammunition to spare for this. The impi might have been turned out at the point of the bayonet, but then honourable members would have got up in the House of Commons and asked spitefully humanitarian questions about butchery of unarmed natives, quite regardless of the fact that these gentle savages had been amusing themselves for months past with the looting and burning of stores and homesteads and the torture and butchery of men, women, and children.

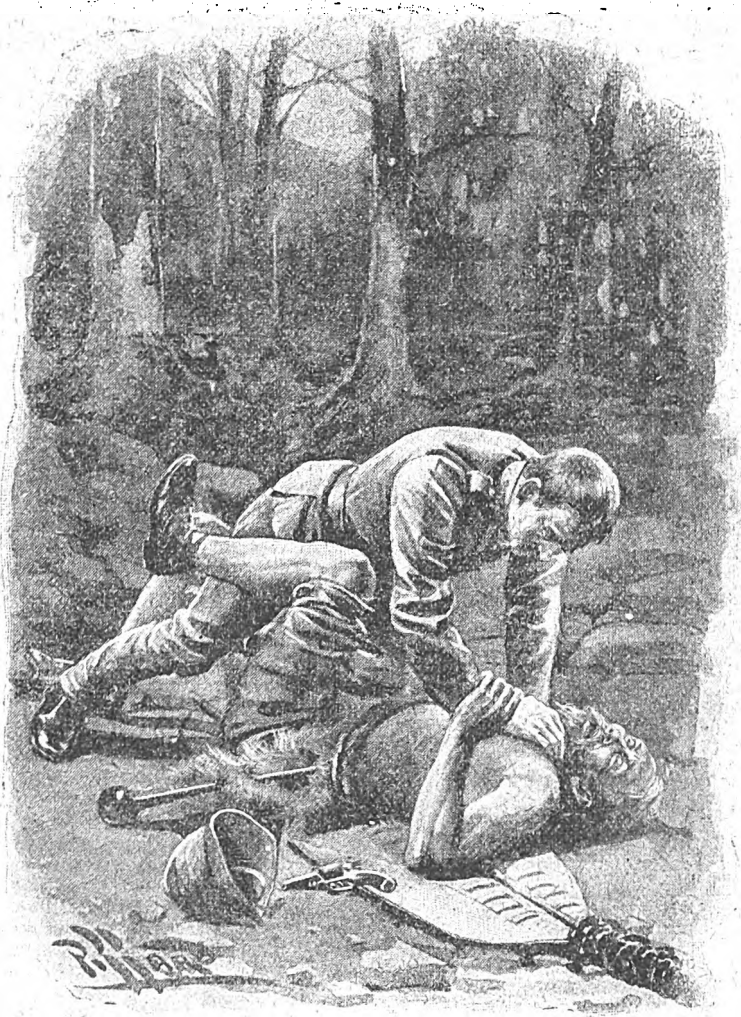
Added to this there was another reason why General Carrington desired a general and unconditional surrender in preference to turning the rebels out by force, and this reason was made apparent later on, in somewhat unexpected fashion, through the agency of our two friends, Ned Dempsey, of the "K" troop, and Private James Anson, of the Lancers.

These two, as it happened, were Cockneys to the soles of their boots, and, more than that, old acquaintances in their unregenerate days before they exchanged the wilds of the Mile End Road for the wilderness of South Africa.

"K" troop was stationed next to the Lancers, and "Jumping Jimmy" had accepted an invitation to supper. At nightfall the sentries were doubled, and a ring of great fires blazed all round the kopje. Between these the sentries walked to and fro, but in consequence of the smallness of the force and the great extent of the circle to be guarded the sentries were somewhat few and far between considering the bush craft and cunning of those they had to confine to the hill.

It was a clear moonless night, and Trooper Dempsey and Private Anson, having tucked up Trooper Hinton and his game leg for the night, went out for a stroll and a last pipe behind the lines before turning in for the night, as their sentry-go wouldn't come round till sunrise. Their troops were stationed on the south side of the kopje, and about a mile away to the southward was a low range of sparsely-wooded hills, on the other side of which flowed the Nuanetzi.

They were strolling towards these hills deeply engrossed in such talk as a couple of thorough-bred Cockneys might be expected to indulge in under such circumstances, and their thoughts were far away in the "little village"—in fact they were both standing, in the spirit, at the bar of an East-end hostelry well known to both—when Trooper Dempsey, whether from long habit of watchfulness, bred of much campaigning in the wilderness, or by some idle, unaccountable impulse, happened to turn his head round.



Trooper Dempsey had jumped on to his man and was choking him.

The next instant a muttered oath in the pungent vernacular of the Mile End Road broke from his lips, his right fist shot out from his shoulder and landed snugly under the chin of a tall Kaffir who had risen like a ghost from the grass, and was in the act of bringing his knob-kerrie down on Private Anson's forage cap, which he was wearing in the cool of the night instead of his helmet.

The Kaffir's teeth clashed together, his head went back, and he tumbled over sideways with a dislocated jaw.

At the same moment Private Anson whipped his revolver out and wheeled round just in time to cover another black, half-naked figure that had risen to its knees and was pointing a heavy Colt six-shooter at Trooper Dempsey. The Lancer's revolver cracked first, and the figure rolled backwards, sending a bullet into the air as it went.

Meanwhile Trooper Dempsey had jumped on to his man, and was choking him, quietly but firmly, into insensibility, and in a few seconds more Private Anson was kneeling on the stomach of the man he had shot, as he soon discovered, clean through the right shoulder. He was groaning and writhing with the pain of his wound and the unpleasant pressure of a pair of bony knees on his midriff, and, not a little to his surprise, the Lancer heard the word "*Allemagtij!*" come, half-spoken and half-groaned, through his clenched teeth. He let out a little low whistle of surprise, and then he said:

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"Have you settled that josser, matey?"

"'Alf a tick, Jimmy, and I'll have the belt round his elbows and a puttie round his legs, and then I'm with you. What's up? Did you kill that nigger with the shooter?"

"Nigger be sugared! This ain't no blooming nigger, unless they've been learning lately to cuss as well as shoot in Dutch, and he ain't dead, neither, though I've got him fair through the right shoulder. Lie down, bust you, or I'll save you the rope to-morrow and throttle you right away. Here, let's see what colour the Lawd made yer."

Private Anson possessed a good deal more of the bulldog courage of the British Tommy than he did of refinement in the use of ways and means, so he just spat in his hand and rubbed it hard on the cheek of his captive. When he took it away there was a broad, dirty grey streak down the side of the man's face.

"Come here, Ned, and look at this," he said in a voice a little husky with excitement. "If you and me doesn't get a stripe apiece for this night's work, there ain't no justice in the British Army. I know'd this wurn't no nigger. He's a blooming Dutch spy, that's what he is—one of them bally Dutchmen wot's been teaching the kaffirs to shoot straight, and giving them Lee-Metfords and cartridges. Strike a match, and let's have a good look at him."

"'Strewth, matey, but you're right," Trooper Dempsey half whispered as he held the flickering light of the wax match over the face of the prostrate man, who had now opened his eyes, and was rolling them from one to the other. "He's no more a Kaffir than I am. I wonder what his little lay was?"

"His little lay?" echoed Private Anson, with a tinge of scorn in his voice. "Here, take my putties off and tie him up while I hold him down, and, I'll tell yer. Can't yer see?" he went on as Trooper Dempsey began to unroll the long strips of cloth which encased his nether limbs from the knee down. "He's managed to sneak through the line somehow with this Kaffir, and the Kaffir, knowing the country better nor you know your prayers, 'ud have took him across the river and guided him as straight as a bee line, as the Yanks say, to where them pals of his is on the frontier, and he'd have given the whole show away if he'd once 'ave got there.

"Yer see this is what the General was waiting for. We could have chucked the niggers out of the kopje right enough, but he knowed there was Dutchmen among 'em, so he wanted to cop the whole kit of 'em and catch the Dutchmen *corpus delicty*, as I heard a lawyer sa once about a burglar as the coppers had nailed 'alf in and 'alf out of a kitchen window."

"Well, strike me pink!" exclaimed Trooper Dempsey, as the truth d wned upon him. "I should never have tumbled to that in a blue moon. Why, if these chaps had got clear away, they'd have brought the Dutchmen up in no time on them quick-stepping, scraggy little 'orses of theirs, and they'd have caught us here in this valley like a regular man-trap, while we was picnicing round this blooming kopje, waiting for the niggers to come out.

"There y'are. Now he's 'elpless as a 'obbled hostrich, and there's the chaps coming from camp at last to see what the row's about. Come on, mateys," he shouted to a dozen dark forms that were hurrying through the long grass and stumpey bushes towards them. "Come on; you don't want yer guns. We've got a half-dead nigger with a broken jaw and a black Dutchman with a bullet in him for you to carry back. Some thick-eyed idiot as thought he was a sentry let 'em through from the kopje. Gawd help him if Freddy spots him; but, 'strewth, won't the General be glad to see this chap!"

Trooper Dempsey never came nearer to the unadulterated truth than he did when he made this last remark. The General *was* pleased when he carried and the sham Kaffirs were on crossed rifles into camp, and the adventure was reported to him. He was so pleased that he confined himself to a bare three minutes of expletives with reference to the sentry who had let them through; then he ordered half the troops to patrol the whole circuit of the kopje for three hours, and then to be relieved by the other half until daylight, when he intended to take sharp and decisive measures to end a situation which the exploit of Trooper Dempsey and Private Anson had proved to be of a very serious character indeed.

The Kaffir-Dutchman he sent away at once to be washed and have his wound attended to, directing him to be brought before him at daybreak the next morning. He paid the two heroes of the exploit a brief but meaning compliment on their luck and the promptness with which they had turned it to account, and sent them off to turn in before their sentry-go came round, instead of which they went and woke up Trooper Hinton, and promptly set him swearing with envy by glowing and much-debated accounts of how the whole thing happened, for, of course, by this time each had naturally got his own version of the adventure, and the more they thrashed out the details, and the more pipes they filled and emptied and the more of the readily-offered flasks they pulled at, the more widely did the two versions differ from each other, until at length the one adventure had become two, and the heroes of it were scarcely on speaking terms.

(To be continued.)

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT THE WAR.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of H. B. Vogel's "Maori Maid," to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. A. Hutton, of 3 Lanage Street, Bradford. Attempts for this week's prize should deal with WAR ANECDOTES and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, March 19th. Post-cards only, please.

A Scotch Reservist.

SCENE: Suburban train up north. Two passengers discussing South African situation.

First Passenger: "Man alive, ye hae nae patriotism aboot ye ava, or ye widna talk in that strain!"

Second Passenger (pro-Boer): "You see, sir, not being a soldier, I am not forced to be patriotic. Many of our Reserves are not patriotic, either, but have to appear to be."

First Passenger: "G'wa wi' ye, ye're haverin'! Only the ither day I heard o' a Reserve man laid up for repairs wha had tae be strappit down while a bloke in the street persisted in soondin' a bugle!"

A. H.

Answered.

NOT long ago a venerable Pat landed for the first time on Chinese soil. Soon he was surrounded by natives, who began to chatter a broken sort of English.

Pat, who was quick-tempered, was not long before he aimed at one of them with a dish which he seized from a shop close by.

A Chinaman's face was badly cut, and Pat was soon brought before the English Consul.

"Why have you done this?" demanded the Consul, to which Pat replied:

"Och! sure the ugly haythens spake broken English, so I gave them broken china in return."

W. S.

Lucky for the Officer.

AN officer went into a barber's shop the other day for a shave. The barber had just gone out, and the boy, expecting him back soon, had lathered the officer; but as the minutes went by and he did not return, the officer grew impatient, and asked the lad if he could shave him.

"I'll try," was the cautious reply.

Whereupon the officer, thinking to frighten the lad, drew his sword and laid it before him, saying sternly:

"Well, try; but if you cut me, I shall cut off your head."

The boy went over it carefully, and finished without mishap.

The officer, after examining his face in the glass, turned to the lad, and said:

"Well, my lad, and weren't you frightened?"

"No," was the reply; "I meant having first go. If I had cut you, I should have cut you properly."

J. D. L.

Prophetic.

SOME years ago a gentleman in Liverpool, who had the misfortune to lose his nose, was followed by an Irish beggarwoman, who kept exclaiming, "Heaven preserve your honour's eyesight!"

The gentleman was at last irritated by her importunity, and said, "Why do you wish my eyesight to be preserved? Nothing ails my eyesight, nor is likely to do."

"No, your honour," said the Irishwoman; "but it will be a sad thing if it does, for you will have nothing to rest your spectacles upon!"

E. W. B.

A Bragging Match.

A PARISIAN paper relates the following story of a contest in boasting, which, it says, took place between three artists of Marseilles. It should be explained that Parisian writers always put their "tall talk" into the mouths of Marseilles people.

"My dear sir," said one of the artists, "yesterday I painted a pine board in imitation of marble, and did it with such fidelity that when the board was put into a pond of water it sank like a stone."

"Pooh!" said the second, "that is nothing. Yesterday I happened to hang up my thermometer on the back of the frame of my 'View in the Arctic Regions,' and the mercury instantly went down to twenty degrees below zero."

"All that is nothing at all," said the third artist. "You know my portrait of the old Marquis of Camargne? Well, it is so life-like that it has to be shaved three times a week!"

E. E. H.

Really Extraordinary.

Two Irishmen got a job to clean some lofty windows.

Having no ladder, however, that would reach the windows, they were rather puzzled how to get to them.

"Pat," said Mike, "I have it. Get a plank, put it through the window. Oi'll sit on the plank outside and you sit on the plank inside."

All went well until Mike at the outside cried out:

"Oi let the window-leather fall."

"All right," again replied Pat; "stop where yez are, and Oi'll git it."

Away went Pat downstairs, and getting into the street, exclaimed:

"Be jabers, Mike, you're here first? Which way did you come?"

F. M. W.

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Corroborative Detail.

A German, being pursued by a policeman, ran into the shop of a friend who was a crockery merchant and hid himself in a bag.

The policeman coming in after him knocked on all the bags and baskets to find out where he was.

When he came to the bag where the German was hid he knocked and not hearing the rattle of china said:

"The German must be in here, for if it was china it would go 'tinkle, tinkle.'"

"Dingle, dingle," said the German inside.

A. L. R.

Beyond His Means.

A certain beggar in a large town has quite a regular staff of almsgivers. On a recent occasion this man accosted one of his patrons as usual, and received from him half-a-crown.

The beggar took it, thanked the donor, but apparently seemed dissatisfied.

"Well, what is it?" said the gentleman.

"It is this, sir. Every month for years past you have given me five shillings, but to-day you give me only half-a-crown. How is that?"

"Well, I'll tell you," said the gentleman smiling good-humouredly. "I have had some unusually heavy expenses this month. My eldest daughter has married, and the outlay for her trousseau has compelled me to retrench in every direction."

"Ah, yes, I see," said the begger. "But, sir, I really can't afford to contribute anything toward your daughter's wedding expenses."

E. A. M.

The Joke that Saved His Life.

A poor widow, in a West-of-England village, used to fatten a pig every year, and this was her only meat supply.

One year, about a month before "piggy" was fit for the knife, it was taken ill, and fearing it would die, the poor woman was in great trouble, and she sent for the vicar, and stated her sad case to him, saying:

"Oh, paason, my poor peg be main bad, and Oi be afraid 'eel die, an' Oi shan't 'ave a mossel o' mate vur a yur. Do ee pray vor'n to live—do ee."

This was a puzzler for the vicar; he felt for the widow, but he didn't like to pray for a pig. But a "happy thought" struck him, and going to the sty he looked as solemn as he could, and said in deep tones:

"O pig, if thou livest, thou livest; but if thou diest, thou diest."

The poor widow thanked him heartily. Fortunately the pig lived, which was a great comfort to the poor old woman, who firmly believed the "paason's" prayer had wrought the cure.

Some time after, the vicar was very ill with quinsy, and was thought to be dying. Upon hearing this, the widow begged so earnestly to be allowed to see him, that at last her request was granted.

Going to the bedside, with tears streaming down her aged cheeks, she sobbed aloud:

"Oh, paason, I be main zorry vor ee! Oh, paason, if thou livest, thou livest; if thou diest, thou diest."

This so amused the vicar that, remembering the pig incident, he laughed so heartily that it broke the quinsy and his life was saved!

R. T.

No Watch Needed.

"My father," said the small boy to the friend who was calling on his mother, "is a great man. He knows what time it is without even looking at his watch."

"What do you mean, Tommy?" queried the visitor

"Oh, when I holler out an' ask him what time it is in the morning, he always says it's:

"'Time to get up.'

"An' when I ask him what time it is in the evenin' he always says:

"'Time to go to bed, Tommy.'

"Oh, I tell you my father is a great man!"

J. K.

He "Surrhounded" Them.

Private Mike McGeever had been out foraging, and had been chased by a party of Boers till darkness enabled him to elude them.

When tired out he fell asleep behind some bushes which afforded good hiding.

At daylight he was wakened by hearing a party of seven Boer scouts, who had left their horses behind a hill and were viewing the British camp. Mike all at once was struck by a daring idea and he proceeded to carry it out.

"Presint arrums," he shouted, "an' be riddy to fire."

He then stepped boldly out in front of the astonished Boers and said:

"Put yer rifles down an' march in front av me into camp quietly or I'll giv the orther an' you'll get a dozen bullets aich."

The astonished Boers, thinking the bushes were lined with soldiers, obeyed, and when Mike had seen them secured he reported to his captain, who asked him:

"How did you manage to capture them yourself?"

He answered, "I surrhounded thim, sur."

C. D.

One Question Too Many.

A certain judge was always noted while he was on the bench for his pertinent questions to witnesses.

One day, a suit was tried before him in which a steamboat company was required to show cause why it should not pay for the damage to certain goods which had been destroyed by some truck horses, that were frightened, as it was claimed, by the horrible and unearthly whistles of the steamer which was about to depart from the pier.

One of the witnesses was Michael Sweeney, an Irishman, who was present at the time of the accident.

The council for the plaintiff, asked Sweeny if his horses were frightened by the whistle of the boat.

"They were not, sor," he said.

"But what kind of an ear have your horses, Mr. Sweeny?" said the barrister.

"They have good ears, sor."

"Did you hear the whistle yourself?"

"I did, sor."

"But," interrupted the judge, turning to the innocent looking Irishman, "what kind of a truck was it that you drove, Mike?"

"A hand cart, sor."

"Ah," said the judge, turning to the counsel——"we have asked one question too many."

W. C. R.

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THE WOMAN DOCTOR.

FRANK MELVILLE had the toothache.

That fact was undeniable. Equally undeniable was the fact that it was a pretty bad one—nay if that gentleman himself had been questioned about it, he would have insisted on it that no human being had ever been under the sway of such a fiendish pain before—that it was impossible for a man to endure such agony five minutes—and this in the face of the fact that he had been suffering its red-hot tortures for fifteen minutes, and was still sufficiently alive to swear like a trooper at each extra twinge.

All day long the tooth had "growled," and now, in this dismal, little rainy town, where he was to spend the night, it had set in to ache at full swing.

Frank Melville's teeth were his pride, and he disliked the thought of having to lose any one of them; but being a man of prompt action, he made up his mind that having it out was preferable to the death which would inevitably overtake him, should he suffer until morn.

On learning there was no dentist in the town, he determined to call upon the kindly offices of the first physician.

"Where does the nearest doctor live?" he inquired of the landlord.

"Just across the way, but——"

Before he could go further, however, the agonised victim was half-way across the street.

There upon the brass door-plate Melville saw the legend in black letters:

"Dr. M. Ravers."

"Is Dr. Ravers in?" demanded he of the neatly dressed maid who answered his summons, with such fierceness that she fell back, fearing him to be an escaped lunatic.

"Is Dr. Ravers in, I asked you?" demanded he again, still more impatiently.

"Yes, sir, yes, sir."

"Then what are you staring at?"

"Nothing, sir. Walk into the surgery," answered Mary in her politest manner, feeling that any other course placed her in imminent danger of being eaten alive.

Obedient to her order, he walked into "the surgery" without further ceremony.

Instead of the doctor, however, he saw a young girl reading a book. She rose politely, and, acknowledging his presence, handed him a chair.

She waited a second or so, with an expectant look upon her face, and then asked, in a sweet, clear voice:

"Can I do anything for you? You seem to be suffering."

"No, thank you. I want to see your father."

This was at random, of course, but then Melville was not in a condition to be very lucid, or anything else that was rational.

"My father?" echoed the girl, with wonder in her voice. "Why, he has been dead ten years."

"I mean Dr. Ravers. I beg your pardon for assuming that he was your father, but this confounded toothache makes me forget everything, my manners included."

A burst of soft merriment made him look angrily at this girl who dared to laugh while he was in such misery.

"It is now my turn to ask your pardon, but I think you will understand my laughing, and excuse it. I am Dr. Ravers. Now, can I do anything for you?"

It was Melville's turn to fall back a step or two, or he would have done so but that he had seated himself at once on entering the surgery; but it is no exaggeration to say that his misery was swallowed up in the momentary shock of amazement.

"But, good heavens—I hate women doctors, and I want this tooth out," he replied angrily, as if he resented her sex, and considered himself personally aggrieved thereby.

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"I'm sorry, but I don't see how I can help it now," demurely answered Dr. Ravers.

"Help what?" asked Melville.

Being a woman doctor, he knew she was laughing at him, although there was not a ghost of a smile on her face, and she shook her head gravely, as though she deprecated the circumstance.

"Where is the next doctor, or is she a woman too?" asked Melville impatiently.

"No, 'she' is a man, and lives a little further up the road, but is away for the night. If you'd wait till about noon to-morrow?" she suggested wickedly, in a questioning tone.

"Heavens! wait till noon! why don't you suggest my waiting till doomsday?" he replied savagely. "Is there no other?"

"Yes, one other—Dr. Walton."

"Is he a man or a woman?"

"He's a man, too. But——"

"But what? Tell me quick. Good gracious! woman, did you ever have the toothache? Hurry up and relieve me."

"I'm perfectly willing to be of any service. Dr. Walton who is your only remaining hope, is sick in bed. Still, you might try there. If not, come back and I'll lend you my forceps, so that you may pull it out yourself."

Melville shot out of the door, muttering to himself.

"A woman doctor! Humph! wanted the job herself, likely, I bet I'll find somebody to take out this confounded mass of pain. Lend me her forceps indeed! A woman that will stand and laugh at a man in my misery must be a perfect fiend."

But then, what could be expected of a woman who would study medicine?

Muttering to himself, he wandered up and down the muddy streets, but all to no purpose.

Misery finally brought him back to Dr. Ravers' door.

"I've come to ask you to lend me your forceps. I'm going to get some man to pull out this thing."

Dr. Ravers hesitated a moment, then said, bravely:

"I offered you my forceps in a spirit of mischief, well knowing you would never undertake the thing yourself. But I cannot put them in the hands of an ignorant person. I am too much of a physician not to be aware of the grave insults that might follow from an injudicious use of them. Yet I don't like to refuse you, for I know you are in much misery, and it seems as if I wanted to do it myself."

Melville could not help admiring the brave manner in which this little lady faced an unpleasant situation.

"Can you really do it? You don't look strong enough."

"I can really do it, and I am strong enough."

"You won't hurt me?"

"That I cannot promise. I will not hurt you unnecessarily."

Doubtfully eyeing the doctor, Frank took his seat and prepared for the operation, which, he persuaded himself, could not be much worse than the misery he was already suffering.

In a moment it was over, but so was Melville, for the sudden revulsion had caused him to faint.

In a moment he came to himself to find soft hands bathing his head.

"Am I dead?" he murmured.

"Oh, no," gaily answered the doctor. "People don't ask questions when they are dead."

Melville sat up straight and looked around in bewilderment. Suddenly it all came to him, and he exclaimed:

"By Jove! You're a plucky one!"

The doctor laughed and seated herself at some little distance while he recovered his equilibrium.

"May I ask you Mr.—Mr.——"

"Melville," supplemented Frank.

"Thank you. May I ask you, Mr. Melville, why you dislike women physicians? Is it on principle?"

"It is, madam, though it sounds ungracious in me to say so."

"But on what principle, Mr. Melville?" persisted the doctor. "Are you acquainted with many of my profession who have proved unworthy of the trust placed in them?"

Frank Melville could not think of a satisfactory answer.

"Ah! then I understand, Mr. Melville. It is prejudice, not principle."

"Mary," she continued, as the maid appeared in answer to her summons, "tell John to harness Jerry now. I shall be ready in a minute or two."

"Are you going out on such a night as this?" exclaimed Melville in amazement.

"Why not? Is it not my business to do it?"

"Well, but I thought women only half did these things."

"I never half do anything I undertake, or I should, perhaps, have left half your tooth in," she replied with dignity. "And now I must also wholly dismiss you, as there is a sick baby waiting for me two miles away."

Bewildered, Melville went over to the hotel. But weariness overcame his bewilderment, and sleep soon had possession of him.

Whirling away to the city the next day, Melville was suddenly struck with an idea that caused him to crimson and strike his knee vigorously.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed aloud, regardless of surroundings. "I never offered the woman a penny for what she did. What must she think of me! The idea of going into a doctor's office, abusing her whole tribe, and then after she had done her very best for me, never even mentioning money to her. Well, what must she think of me."

And the thought of Dr. Ravers' mirth-filled eyes, as she, no doubt, enjoyed the situation, was almost as hard to bear as the toothache had been.

"I'll send it to her as soon as I get home," he muttered.

Sitting down in his room to send the desired money, he found himself in a quandary. He did not know what her charges were. To offer her too little was shameful; to offer her too much looked like ostentation or charity. Further, if he sent it by post he would never know whether she received it unless he asked her to acknowledge it, and if he did that—ask a woman to acknowledge the receipt—he would look mean.

Altogether he found himself caring much for the opinion of this much to be despised "woman doctor," although he told himself he didn't care what she thought.

He settled it that he would go down specially and see her, and pay his bill in the course of three or four days, and "be done with her."

But before he had a chance, important business took him across the Atlantic, and the annoying matter was swallowed up in matters of greater importance.

After three months of hard work, he sat down upon he deck of the *Umbria* to rest. Noting the bustle and

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confusion of voices around him, there came to him from some little distance away one "good-bye" that affected him strangely.

Turning to note the owner of the voice, he saw a face strangely familiar yet curiously unknown. Upon the arm of the young girl leant a sweet-faced, white-haired old lady.

"Be careful, mother," said the voice he knew, "you will fall."

But the warning came too late. The old lady tripped and fell directly into Frank's arms, spread to catch her.

"Thank you, sir, oh, thank you!" exclaimed the daughter, in a frightened voice. "Mother, dear, are you hurt?"

"Not at all, Maud," but the mother trembled still with fright.

"Let me take your mother downstairs," said Melville earnestly.

At the sound of his voice the daughter started (she had not looked at him before) and looked at him quickly.

"Thank you, Mr. Melville," she said, with a smile, "I shall be glad to have you help me."

"Dr. Ravers!" exclaimed Frank, enlightened at last as to the resemblance and voice which had baffled him.

The voyage was a beautiful one, and these three, so strangely thrown together, and knowing no one else, found much to say to each other, and Mrs. Ravers, who thought of what her baby boy might have been had he lived to be strong and tall, and tender as this young man was, had a very kindly feeling for Melville.

Many times Frank wished he could speak of that thoughtless act of his, but innate delicacy prevented, and he felt that, unless something extraordinary happened he must for ever have that in his mind. Frank had one peculiarity—a hatred of small obligations—and this made him uncomfortable under the present circumstances.

A few days more, and they parted, with an earnest invitation from Mrs. Ravers to come and see them—an invitation heartily accepted by Melville.

"Really," he said to himself, "I must go and see the dear old lady soon."

"Soon" proved to be at the end of a week. Week followed week, and with it, every Wednesday evening, with unfailing regularity, was Frank found at the Ravers, visiting the old lady. Maud flitted in and out, and paid no particular attention to him. But her mother noticed with a smile, that lately on Wednesdays Maud seemed in somewhat of a hurry, and managed to get through with her regular visits earlier in the day, so as to give the evening only to "casuals."

But one evening came when Mrs. Ravers was unwell and unable to see him. A sudden resolve fired Frank.

"Dr. Ravers," said he, bravely looking at her with his honest eyes. "I owe you a debt. Wait!" as she was about to interrupt him. "A year ago to-night, and just such a night, I came here for your services. Well, no," he corrected himself, with a laugh, "not exactly that, for your father's services. I have never settled the debt I owe you."

"Mr. Melville!" she exclaimed, with a hurt look that nearly distracted him.

"And to-night I am determined to pay it."

"An offer of money from you now, Mr. Melville, I regard as an insult, and one which I never expected to receive at the hands of one whom I had grown to regard as a dear friend." And tears trembled in her eyes, showing how deep was the wound in her heart.

"Miss Ravers," exclaimed Frank, with an intonation that made her tremble, while the blood drifted slowly away from her face, though she would not meet his eye. "I did not intend to offer money, I intended to offer myself. Not," he added, hypocritically, "that I consider myself anything like an equivalent for the sum due to you."

Maud looked up and laughed; she could not help it. The abject humility of this last was too much for her. It is no doubt very improper to laugh on such occasions, but it cannot be denied that she laughed.

"You see," he continued, "I want to pay my debt with interest—nay, more than interest, with love!"

"But you forget, Mr. Melville, that I am 'a woman doctor,' and you 'hate us all.'"

"Oh, no, not all, my darling!" seeing no denial in her face, "for I love you. Come!" and he held out his arms to her.

A second's hesitation, and she went forward into the shelter of his arms, saying, as she laid her head against him:

"I am tired, Frank, and you always rest me so; though I would not have acknowledged it before," she added roguishly. "But doesn't it strike you as being a rather conceited way of paying a debt?"

"I admit it," he assented, with much humility; "and even now you have a perfect right, if you prefer——" and his hand travelled towards his pocket.

"No, never mind," she replied, laughing. "A fair exchange is no robbery."

"To think I should have sold myself for five shillings!" exclaimed Melville dolefully. W. Merstone.

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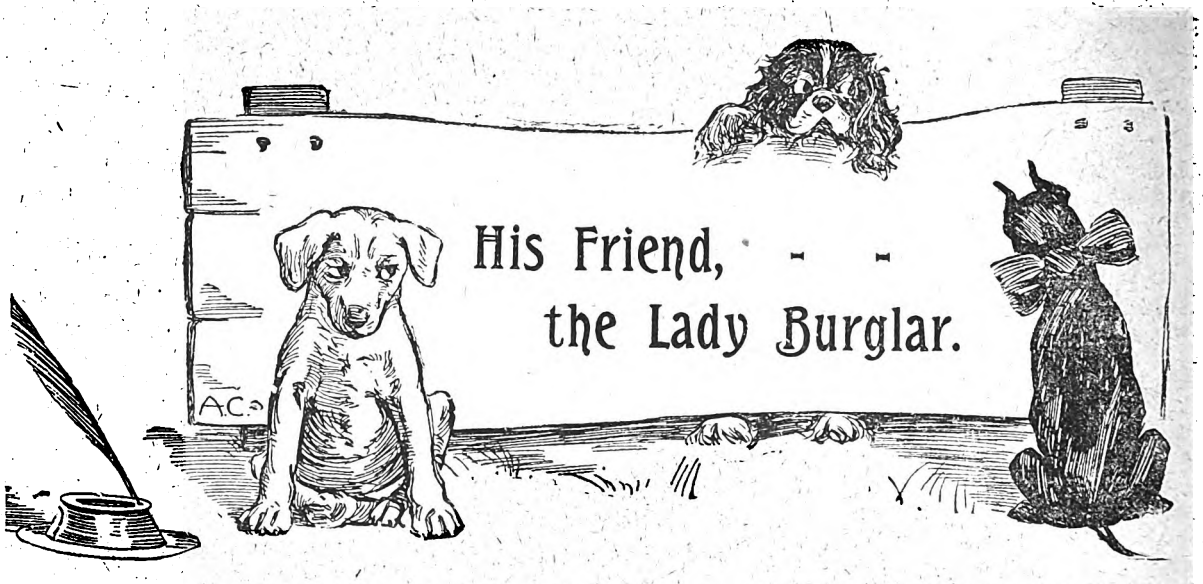

His Friend, - - the Lady Burglar.

AMONG the very few persons of any note in the Metropolis who had never been interviewed, whose drawing-room had not been photographed and reproduced in the illustrated papers, and whose personal habits, tastes, failings and favourite amusements had not been set forth in black and white for the edification of Tomkins and Watson and Jobbings, was Miss Brenda Winchester.

Miss Winchester had written sixteen novels in three years, a record which the *Saturday Scorcher* described as marvellous, and the *Weekly Scalper* as scandalous. Each of the sixteen had gone into eight editions, and the name of Winchester was a household word from Penzance to Pentonville. Hammersmith to the Highlands. And yet, Miss Winchester had never been interviewed, not once.

It wasn't for want of trying on the part of the Press that she had escaped a two-column dialogue in *The Young Schoolgirl*, or an illustrated interview in the *Ball's Pond Gazette*. Miss Winchester had not published her third novel, "The Woman Who Tried Very Hard To But Who Failed In The Attempt," before the interviewers were on her track. They hung round her hall-door and peeped down her area steps; they were to be discovered peering over the walls of the back garden and listening at the key-hole of the kitchen door. Further than that they never got. The talented authoress turned a deaf ear to the glibly written invitations from enterprising editors, and declined to admit a single representative of the Fourth Estate.

The mystery surrounding the personality of Miss Winchester only made the appetite of the public for information concerning her the keener. The wildest stories were set afloat concerning the lady, her habits and her doings. It was asserted by some that she lived the life of an ascetic, that her house was as bare of furniture and the common comforts of life as a monastic cell, while others asserted that she revelled in the most elaborate luxury, and lived the life of an Eastern voluptuary.

In course of time the Press grew disheartened, and caught chills and things, or were moved on by the police, and so gave up the ghost. Miss Winchester was written off as a "bad debt," and dismissed from the editorial mind as an unproductive material for the making of "copy."

Only one pressman remained who stuck firmly to his post, and resolved that, come what might, he should enter Trefoil Cottage or perish in the attempt.

Young Flinnigan, of the *Trumpet*, was an enthusiast and a firm believer in the axiom that if you want a thing, and wait long enough for it, that particular object is sooner or later bound to become yours. So he stuck to the pursuit with dogged determination.

His reward came one evening

It was announced that Miss Winchester had gone to Monte Carlo to recruit after the arduous labours incidental to the production of her seventeenth *chef d'œuvre* "A Nineteenth Century Cain, and other stories for the Young," and curious to verify the accuracy of this statement, Flinnigan betook himself to Trefoil Cottage. The house was in darkness, the blinds were drawn down, and an air of desolation reigned over the place. He wandered round to the back of the house. All was darkness there also. There was not a sign of life. He was about to move away when he noticed with a feeling of the keenest emotion that a window in the lower portion of the house was partly open.

"The work of a careless servant," he muttered, "but it is my opportunity, and why should I not avail myself of it? Surely it is a stroke of fortune, and I should be unworthy of my noble profession if I allowed the magnificent chance to slip through my fingers."

Two minutes later his mind was made up, and he had scaled the wall, crept across the lawn, raised the sash, squeezed himself through the opening, and entered the house.

Once inside it took him some moments to collect himself. The enterprise was a daring one, and the utmost caution was necessary if he did not wish to raise an alarm and get himself into trouble.

He lit a candle, and producing a note-book, began hurriedly to examine his surroundings. It was not long before professional zeal overmastered his first natural feeling of nervousness, and he was busy with note-book and pencil, jotting down details and making rough sketches of everything and anything that seemed to be worthy of record. From one room he passed to another, gloating over his success and picturing to himself the brilliant descriptive article which he would turn out.

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"It will be a triumph for the *Trumpet!*" he exclaimed to himself as he crept upstairs, "all London, all England, would read it, and it will be the sensation of the season."

He passed into Miss Winchester's bedchamber, a dainty apartment decorated in egg-shell blue and white, and filled with the prettiest furniture and knick-knacks that wealth and taste combined could bring together.

He was examining some curios in a cabinet when he became aware that someone was ascending the stairs.

His first thought was that a vigilant constable had observed the light, and "having suspicions," had entered the house with a view to discovering the cause thereof. But the step was not of a policeman. There was an airy, fairy-like lightness about it which never belonged to a police boot. It was the step of a woman.

"One of the servants," Flinnigan muttered, his ears wide agape to catch the smallest sound. "What an idiot I am! I might have known that the house would not have been left entirely tenantless. I will hide for the present, and at the first favourable opportunity make my escape."

He slipped into a large cupboard, having previously extinguished his candle, and awaited developments with a beating heart.

He had scarcely concealed himself when the door of the room was opened and a woman, young, pretty and graceful, entered, bearing a lamp.

Unconscious of the fact that she was not alone, she closed the door and locked it, and placing the lamp on the dressing-table proceeded to disrobe.

Flinnigan burst out into a cold perspiration.

He had not reckoned upon this incident and the spectacle unnerved him. For some moments he remained breathless and unhappy, a silent spectator of the scene before him.

Thus things reached a crucial stage, and resolving to declare himself, make a clean breast of the whole business, and throw himself upon the clemency of the stranger rather than be discovered and cause a scene, he coughed twice, and then emerged from his seclusion.

"Madame," he said, as calmly and quietly as he could, "I beg, I implore you not to be alarmed."

The young woman regarded him coolly.

"Do not distress yourself," she replied. "I am not in the least alarmed."

"Thank you," answered Flinnigan, considerably relieved, "that makes my task of explanation all the easier. I am here——"

"Any explanation is quite unnecessary. I am perfectly acquainted with the reasons which prompted you to enter this house."

"You are," he exclaimed with surprise, not unmixed with joy at the unexpected turn of affairs, "I am indeed delighted to hear it."

"Then understand," continued the young woman calmly, "that I am here on precisely the same errand, to pocket every portable thing I can lay my hands on."

"A burglar?"

"Precisely—like yourself."

"But, pardon me, you make a mistake I am——"

"That will do, my friend. I know a pal when I see one. I thought that I should be the first to crack this crib, and I didn't expect to find anyone had got here before me."

"But I thought you were going to retire for the night."

"I am going to retire directly—through the door. When you interrupted me I was taking off my things with the intention of dressing in some of the nice frocks which are stowed away in these wardrobes. You can put several silk frocks on, one over the other, you know. It's an easy way to carry them, and you don't excite suspicion. And with a big fur cloak over the lot, there's a beauty on the third hook yonder, one can walk past the sharpest-eyed constable without causing him to look at you twice."

"Very clever, no doubt, but as that is not my business, I'll wish you a very good night."

"Oh, no you won't my friend," said the damsel, retreating to the door, taking the key from the lock and calmly pocketing it, "you've been here before me, and of course you've picked up all the best bits. I thought there wasn't over much jewelery about."

Flinnigan couldn't help smiling.

"You've made a big mistake," he said, "I've got nothing, absolutely nothing."

"That's all my eye. Turn out your pockets."

"With pleasure."

Flinnigan took everything he possessed out and laid it on the dressing-table. The collection was not a particularly valuable one. A watch, bunch of keys, twelve shillings and sixpence in silver and bronze, a much worn cigar case, some odd papers and letters, his precious note-book, a lead pencil and a briar pipe. The unknown surveyed the collection grimly, and taking up the note-book examined it closely.

"What's all this description for?" she asked presently.

"Well, if you must know, I'm on the staff of the *Trumpet*, and that's to be worked up into an article and published in to-morrow's edition."

"I see," she said dreamily, "and so you are a newspaper man, at least so you say. Well, it may be so. And I daresay you would get a guinea or so for this, eh?"

"I should get five or six guineas at least. It's exclusive news."

"You shan't be done out of this. I'll write the article for you myself."

"You?"

"Oh yes, I can write a bit. I'm one of the New Women, you know; can do a little of everything: cycle, skate, play billiards, twang the banjo, sing a comic song, smoke a cigarette, dance the hornpipe, and all that. Now, sit down and be quiet and I'll turn you out some splendid 'copy.' I know every inch of this house, and I can write about things that you know nothing of. You can smoke if you like, but you mustn't speak. And if you stir I'll make it warm for you."

She went to a side table, opened a box, produced a revolver, loaded it, cocked the trigger, and placed it in front of her. Then she sat down took a pen, dipped it in the ink, reflected a moment, and then bending over a sheet of paper, she began to write with extraordinary rapidity.

Flinnigan, completely dumfounded, sank helplessly into a chair, and watched her as one bewitched.

She wrote for an hour without stopping; then she laid down her pen, and pinning the sheets neatly together, she placed them in an envelope and sealed it up.

"May I not see what you have written?"

"There is not time now. You shall see to-morrow."

Then she finished dressing, and donning a hat and cloak, she unlocked the door.

"You will wait here until I return," she said; "there is no possible means of escape, so it is useless trying to

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get out. There are bars outside the window; besides it is sixty feet from the ground; so you would break your neck even if you got outside, which you can't. The door, too, is bolted on the outside, and the chimney's too small to admit you. So the best thing you can do is to sit still and finish your cigar quietly until I return."

She vanished, and he heard the bolts shot home.

He sat there until daylight broke and the lamp went out. He tried the door, the window, the chimney. All was as she had stated. He was a prisoner in an empty house with no possible chance of escape.

He watched the hands of the clock travel round as the hours slowly sped away. Then when noon was reached he grew desperate. He opened the window and yelled. He beat the door and tugged at the bell, he screamed and smashed things. Was he to be left to starve, to go mad, to die of thirst, without being able to let anyone know that he was locked in like a prisoner? One o'clock, two o'clock, three o'clock. He began to grow desperate.

Another night in that awful solitude would turn his brain. Four o'clock struck and daylight was beginning to fade when the door opened and his friend, the lady burglar, entered.

She had a newspaper in her hand. It was the *Drum*, the deadly enemy and most caustic rival of the *Trumpet*.

"It is the fourth edition," she said sweetly. "It has got your article in it. Unfortunately I sent it to the wrong paper, but it doesn't really matter, for all London is talking about it."

Speechless with rage, he tore the sheet from her hands and sat down and read.

The article was a long, scathing, and mercilessly detailed acount of his own adventures, of his capture, imprisonment and degradation. The headlines alone cut him like a knife.

THE INTERVIEWER SCOTCHED!

A SMART JOURNALIST TRAPPED BY A PRETTY WOMAN!

THE COWARDLY PENMAN AND THE BOGUS BURGLAR!

SHUT UP FOR TWELVE HOURS WITHOUT BREAD OR WATER!

The rest was to match.

And the article was signed in large capitals:

BRENDA WINCHESTER.

Needless to say, Flinnigan never did much in the interviewing line after this escapade.

F. C. THORNTON.

BOAT RACE COMPETITION.

ON Saturday, March 31st, the Oxford v Cambridge Boat Race will take place. There is every reason to believe that the contest will be an exciting one, and so that our readers might take additional interest in the national event we offer a Prize of £5 to the sender of the coupon, printed below, giving most nearly correct: (1) The Winning Boat; (2) the distance separating the two boats at the finish; (3) the time taken by the winning boat in the race. The third condition will only be used to decide the actual winner of the prize in the event of more than one giving equally correct answers to the other two questions.

The Judges' decision of the race will be our standard for making the award.

Having filled up the coupon to your thinking, sign your name and address in the space provided on the left and get two friends to sign their names and addresses on the right. In the event of your winning the prize they will each receive £1. Competitors may send in any number of attempts, all of which may be signed by the same witnesses.

In the event of two or more competitors qualifying for the first prize, the £5 will be equally divided. The witnesses will also share in the same way.

Up to the present time fifty-six races have been rowed. Oxford have won thirty-two and Cambridge twenty-three races, the 1877 contest being a dead heat. Cambridge won last year by 3¼ lengths, the time being 2 min. 4sec. Oxford won the races for the preceding nine years, their times being from a minimum of 18min. 47sec. to a maximum of 22min. 15sec., and their wins during that time from half-a-length to thirteen lengths.

All envelopes containing coupons should be addressed: "BOAT RACE COMPETITION," *Short Stories*, 17 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and should reach us not later than the first post, Wednesday, March 28th.

"SHORT STORIES" BOAT RACE COMPETITION COUPON.

TIME OF WINNING BOAT:

Winning Boat: .....

Min. .....

Sec. .....

Distance Won by: .....

Competitor. .....

.....

.....

Witnesses. .....

.....

.....

.....

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DRUNKENNESS

CURED. This can be done with or without patient's knowledge. Send me a stamp and I will tell you how. (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Mrs. C. H. (Room 8), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

NOSE

MACHINES. LEES RAY, S. C. Dept., South Castle St. Liverpool, is a specialist on Ugly and Red Noses. Send stamp for particulars of his patent scientific Nose Improvers. Red Nose Cure, medically approved, 3/9. Outstanding Ear Machines, 11/6.

Zox Cures Neuralgia

FREE TEST OFFERED.

So certain are we that this distressing Disease of the Nerves can be cured, that we will gladly post two free samples to any reader of SHORT STORIES who will send stamped addressed envelope. Easy and pleasant to take; free from injurious substance. *Of all Chemists at 1/- and 2/6 per Box, or Post free from*

ZOX CO., 11 HATTON GARDEN, LONDON, E.C.

WHY BE FAT?

When a lady, who has discovered a simple means of Self-Cure will be happy to send particulars of same to any sufferer from this distressing complaint. Free on receipt of stamped addressed envelope. ADDRESS:

Mrs. TREVOR WELLS,

63 *HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON, W.C.*

VARICOCELE.

Men who are weak and suffering from nervous exhaustion, loss of vigour, Varicocele, &c., can be successfully and permanently cured without operation or detention from business by THE DR. COLLINS most improved and rational method medical science has ever yet produced.

Particulars and proofs of successful cures sent free on receipt of address.

THE COLLINS REMEDY CO.,

Gothic House, 9 Erskine Street, Liverpool

JUNO CYCLES FOR LADIES AND GENTS.

FREE OR FIXED WHEELS.

LISTS POST FREE

THE VERY BEST.

Carriage Paid. Discount for Cash.

	Monthly
£10 ...	16/8
£10 10s. ...	17/6
£12 ...	20/-
£12 12s. ...	21/-
£14 14s. ...	24/5
£15 15s. ...	26/3

Road Racer ... £10 0s. 16s. 8d. Monthly. Write for New Light Roadster, £10 10s. 17s. 6d. Monthly. Season's List of JUNO Cycles and Accessories, over 100 pages, sent post free. Scorcher Brake, 1/-; Standard Cyclometer, 10,000 miles, 1/10

METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS CO. Ltd.

Juno Cycle School & Works, 75, 76, Bishopsgate Street, Without, E.C., and Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

A SUM of from 12s. to 25s. per week can be earned in spare hours or evenings by either sex everywhere.—Send addressed envelope for particulars to Box 24, Eclipse Works, 89 Aldersgate Street, E.C.

HAVE YOU EVER TRIED KEATING'S LOZENGES FOR YOUR COUGH?

DR. GABRIEL, M.D., L.R.C.P.

writes from Routh Park, Cardiff, Sept. 28th.

"I have now prescribed them for the "last 8 years in my hospitals and private "practice, and find them of great benefit. "I certainly and most strongly "recommend them."

Sold everywhere in Tins 1/1½ each.

HAIR DESTROYED.

Send me an envelope (stamped and addressed) and I will tell you how to remove all superfluous hair free of charge. (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, MISS E. V. (Room 3), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

DEVONSHIRE CREAM

(Really Genuine.) In Patent Air-tight Tins. ½-lb., 1/4; 1-lb., 2/4; 2-lb., 4/-, including Tin and Postage.

Mrs. CONYERS, Morchard Bishop, DEVON.

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

EPPS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

ROSY CHEEKS

and a lovely complexion, skin clear as Alabaster, produced by one box of **Dr. LENNOX'S Harmless Arsenic Wafers,** the only cure for Pimples, Blackheads, Sallow or Greasy Skins, no matter how bad. Price per box, privately packed with Medical and Analytical Reports by Dr. Griffiths and Granville Sharpe, F.C.S., 2/6 post free. H. LENNOX, 21 Electric Avenue, Brixton, London. Absolutely harmless to the most delicate. Thousands of testimonials.

TOO STOUT.

I was for years; by chance I came across a simple home remedy that reduced me from 17st. to 10st. 12lbs., and I will willingly send particulars free to any sufferer enclosing stamp. Mrs. L. E. FELL, 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR.

KAPUTINE

SAFE REMEDY CURES

HEADACHE and NEURALGIA

IMMEDIATELY,

And is sold by all leading Chemists in Packets of 18 Doses, 1s.

To ANYONE HAVING THE LEAST DIFFICULTY, it will be sent post free for 12 Stamps by "KAPUTINE Ltd.," Huddersfield; or, on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope, A. M. Kaputine, Huddersfield, you will receive a free sample.

The fact that "KAPUTINE" is recommended by many leading Medical Men, and is used in National Hospitals and Infirmaries proves that it is THE, THE recognised SAFE REMEDY FOR HEADACHES.

Refuse Substitutes and demand "KAPUTINE," the Safe Remedy. There is no substitute "LIKE IT"; nothing "AS GOOD"; nothing "SIMILAR."

KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR.

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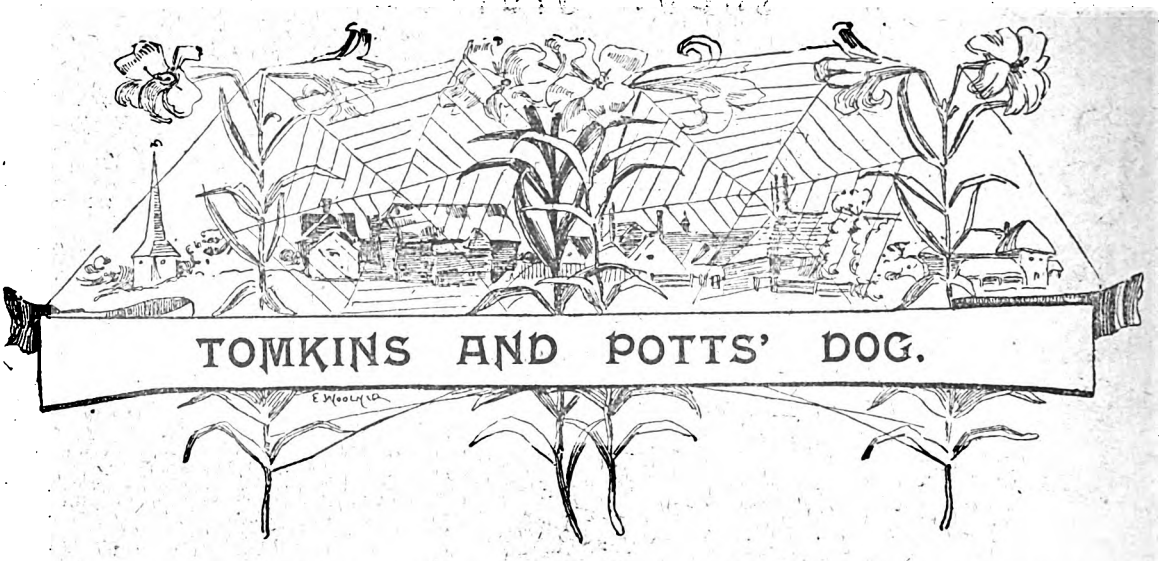

TOMKINS AND POTTS' DOG.

A MAN called on a solicitor the other day, and said, "My name is Tomkins. I called to see you about a dog difficulty that bewilders me, and I thought maybe you might throw some light on it. Might give me the law points, so's I'd know whether it was worth while suing or not.

"Well, you see, me and Potts went into partnership on a dog; we bought him. He was a setter, and Potts and I went shares in him, so's to take him out shooting. It was never exactly settled which half of him I owned or which half belonged to Potts; but I formed an idea in my own mind that the hind end was mine and the front end Potts'. Consequence was, that when the dog barked I always said:

"'There goes Potts' half exercising himself.'

"When the dog's tail wagged I always considered that my end was being agitated, and, of course, when one of my hind legs scratched one of Potts' ears or one of his shoulders, I was perfectly satisfied; first, because that sort of thing was good for the whole dog, and second, because the thing would get about even when Potts' head would reach round and snap at a fly on my hind legs.

"Well, things went along smoothly enough for a while, until one day that dog began to get into the habit of running round after his tail. He was the most foolish dog I ever saw. Used to chase his tail round and round until he'd get so giddy he couldn't bark, and you know I was frightened lest it might hurt the dog's health, and as Potts didn't seem to be willing to keep his end from circulating in pursuit of my end, I made up my mind to chop the dog's tail off, so's to make him reform and behave.

"So last Saturday I caused the dog to back up against a log, and then I suddenly dropped the axe on his tail pretty close up, and the next minute he was running round the yard howling like a boatload of wild cats. Just then Potts came up and he made remarks because I'd cut off that tail.

"One word brought another, and pretty soon Potts set the dog on me—half mine, too, mind you—and the dog bit me in the leg, see that; look at that leg. About half a pound gone; eat up by that dog.

"Now, what I want to see you about is this! can't I recover damages for assault and battery from Potts? What I chopped off belonged to me, recollect. I owned an individual half of that setter pup, from the tip of his tail right up to his third rib, and I had a right to cut away as much of it as I had a mind to; while Potts being sole owner of the dog's head is responsible when he bites anyone or when he barks at night."

"I don't know," replied the lawyer, musingly, "there haven't been any decisions on cases exactly like this, but what does Mr. Potts say upon the subject."

"Why, Potts' view is that I divided the dog the wrong way. When he wants to map out his half he draws a line from the head to the tail. That gives me one hind leg and one fore leg, and makes him joint proprietor in the tail. And he says that if I wanted to cut off my half of the tail I might have done it, and he wouldn't have cared; but what made him mad was that I wasted his property without consulting him.

"But that theory seems to me a little strained, and, if it's legal, why, I'm going to sell half of the dog at a sacrifice sooner than hold any interest in him on those principles. Now, what do you think about it? Don't sue Potts, you say?"

"I think not."

"Can't get damages for the piece that's been bitten out of me?"

"I hardly think you can."

"Well, well! And yet you talk about civilisation, and temples of justice, and such things. All right. Let it go. I can stand it; but don't ever anybody undertake to tell me that the law protects human beings in their rights. Good morning."

"Wait a moment, Mr. Tomkins, you've forgotten my fee!"

"F-f-fee! Why, you don't charge anything when I don't sue, do you?"

"Certainly, for my advice. My fee is one guinea."

"One guinea! Why, that's just what I paid for my half of that dog. I haven't got a shilling to my name. But I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll make over all my rights in that setter pup to you, and you can go round and fight it out with Potts. If that dog bites me again, I'll sue you and Potts as sure as my name's Tompkins."

E. N. G.

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A REGULAR CORKER

PEARSON'S WONDERFUL TALKING PUZZLE

IT'S HARD TO HOLD A GOOD THING DOWN.

WE CAN'T STOP THE RUSH.

HAVE YOU GOT ONE?

£100 in PRIZES.

EVERYONE HAS AN EQUAL CHANCE.

GET ONE TO-DAY.

SOLD AT ALL BOOKSTALLS AND NEWSAGENTS.

. . . PRICE . . .

ONE SHILLING.

POST FREE, 1s. 1½d. DIRECT FROM US.

Mark your envelope "TALKING PUZZLE," and address it to

C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., HENRIETTA STREET, LONDON.

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The Brain Gymnasium.

In these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, Short Stories, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by Monday, March 26th, 1900.

No. 64.

From the letters contained in words signifying "a mark," "a fruit," "a large bird," "a small bird," "to idle about," and "a fast ning," form the names of three well-known sports—two words being used for each game.

No. 65.

The name of a celebrated painter will give the letters used in w rds signifying "a measure," "condition," "trim," and "a company." If these words be prope ly arranged, their diagonal, read downwards from left to right, will give a word meaning "a weapon." What is the name of the painter?

No. 66.

The initial of a word signifying "to cut" can be changed eight times, so that eight other words are given. The letters of each of these words can be transposed so that nine different words are formed. If the finals of these are changed, nine other words are given. What are the words?

No. 67.

AC—DO—SA—OD—FL—ST—ON—FA—TR—OT—CI
HO—UR—LE—SO—CE—AM—NE—RO—BE—SO—AR.

Join the above pairs of letters so that eleven words of equal length are given. Take the two central letters of seven, and the first and last letters of the others, and form the names of a famous British General and a country with which his name will always be associated.

No. 68.

* * * * * * *
* * * * * * *
* * * * * * *
* * * * * * *

The top line of asterisks represents the name of a Shakespearian character, and the bottom line, read backwards, the name of her father. The vertical rows are to give words which signify "a fish," "a poem," "an eatable," "a mark," "lazily," "money," and "assists."

No. 69.

Form three words of the same length from the following letters, and place them so th t, read vertically, five other words are given:

A A A B E E E N O O P R R T T

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Nos. 40 to 45.

In this week's competition, fifty-two competitors were absolutely correct. We have again added to the prizes offered (viz., £2 and ten silver-plated pencil-cases), and are forwarding to each of the following a postal order for one shilling, together with one of the pencil-cases.

E. J. Carter, Holloway; O. S. Sinnatt, Manchester; W. F. Broad, Fulham; J. Boyd, Glasgow; E. Hutchings, High Holborn; Miss M. Selvey, Cardiff; A. Gardener, Leytonstone; Miss M. Abbott, Norbiton; H. H. Edmondson, Brighton; C. D. Frazer, Southend-on-Sea; F. Be-sant, Falmouth; S. J. Bailey, Sunningdale, Berks; J. Matthews, Chiswick; Miss K. M. Wood, Sidcup; T. W. Sandford, Stratford; R. H. Wolseley, Worcestershire; E. J. Webster, Maidstone; S. F. Weall, Barnsbury; H. B. Thompson, Bracknell, Berks; J. Percy, Custom House, E.; J. McCormick, Dublin; Miss E. Hill, Barnes; F. A. Kirke, Southend-on-Sea; Miss O. Marcus, Blackheath; A. F. Smith, Hornsey; R. Patterson, Newcastle-on-Tyne; Mrs. E. Mays, New Brompton; Miss M. Rafferty, Edinburgh; J. Purdon, Enfield; J. White, Liverpool; H. Birch, Stoke Newington; Miss M. Maxted, Clapham Junction; H. Barnes, Camberwell; W. Gyde, Warley; T. Picton, Fulham; A. Ward, Portsmouth; W. Crampton, Manchester; F. G. Melville, Bristol; C. Rowland, Droylsden; Miss N. Garnham, Holloway; W. J. Webster, Bromley; C. M. Brock, Botley; M. Carpenter, South Hampstead; Miss M. Levy, Bayswater; J. Braidwood, Edinburgh; A. J. Howlett, Leyton; A. R. Carpenter, South Hampstead; J. Kean, Edinburgh; C. Till, Sheerness; J. Day, Stamford Hill; Mrs. Bessant, Falmouth; H. J. Gibbs, Swansea.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES

Appearing in No. 582, February 24th.

No. 46.
P I P.
U S E.
P O T.

No. 47. MOZAMBIQUE. Mood—zeal—mob—inquiring—uneasiness.

No. 48. D R A Y. Y A R D.

No. 49. A ROLLING STONE GATHERS NO MOSS.

No. 50.
We do that in our zeal,
Our calmer moments are
afraid to answer.
Scott.—"Woodstock" Chap. xvii.

No. 51.
P O R T
O B O E
R O A N
T E N T.

SHORT STORIES ADVERTISEMENT RATES.

Single column, per inch, per insertion	£0 10 0
Double " " "	1 0 0
Full page inside, facing page of matter, either white paper or 2nd or 3rd page of cover, or back page, per insertion	10 0 0
Half-page " " "	5 0 0
Quarter-page " "	2 10 0
Eighth-page " "	1 5 0
Front page, whole " "	12 10 0
" half	6 5 0

All spaces above one-eighth of a page are charged at per page rate.

Series discount: 5 per cent. for 13, 10 per cent. for 26, 15 per cent. for 52 insertions.

Black blocks are charged 25 per cent. extra. All advertisements are subject to approval. All copy must be sent in by Noon on Tuesday, April 20th, if intended for the issue on sale April 3rd, and dated April 7th. The Proprietors reserve the right to hold over or suspend the insertion of any advertisement without prejudice to other insertions on order. All communications should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, "Pearson's Weekly" Offices, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Printed and Published by C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., at Pearson's Weekly Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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NOBODY WILL STEAL THEM.

There are two reasons why the Crown jewels are never stolen from the Tower of London. They are in a strong place, well guarded, and are dangerous things to handle when dishonestly come by.

Most losses of valuables are due either to carelessness on the part of the owners or custodians, or to bribery. Perhaps the burglar's vocation is under no circumstances an absolutely safe one, but not infrequently he chances upon a "job" which is both easy and lucrative. I do not mention this fact for the unworthy purpose of inducing any of the youth of the land to enter the profession, but solely to throw illustrative light upon quite another theme. Still, there is a relation between them, and we shall hit it after we have talked a bit about the case of Mrs. Mary Rowlands, who lives in Wales.

The lady says that no longer ago than February (1898) she had a severe attack of influenza, followed by bronchitis. At this point we are concerned to know whether the influenza was in any sense responsible for the bronchitis, as cause and effect. If so, why? It is well understood, of course, in England, where influenza is so common, that other ailments *do* follow it; yet, probably, the majority of us have not settled in our minds the reason for it.

At all events, Mrs. Rowlands had a low, bad time. The trouble lingered along as, sometimes, winter does, away down into the period proper for May blossoms. She could not seem to get the better of the throat ailment nor master the lethargy and weakness left her as a legacy by the influenza. Her condition may be likened unto that of a ship which has indeed survived a gale but finds herself stripped of the sails needed to enable her to take advantage of gentler winds.

The lady's hope of getting back her lost strength by taking plenty of solid, nourishing food was illusory. Every meal of that kind caused fearful distress in the stomach and acute pain at the chest. Nature distinctly repudiated the solid food, and almost as strenuously objected to the liquids, such as broths, teas, and milk. It looked as if Mrs. Rowlands must starve at her own table.

Then came on asthmatic symptoms, so bad, she was often obliged to gasp for breath. Between this combination of complaints she got but little rest day or night. Soon after arose a threat of a still more serious disease—a threat happily not fulfilled. I refer to the cold, clammy sweats that broke out upon her, pointing to a fatal decline. The fear was natural, as grim Consumption, with his poisoned dart, often approaches by that same road.

"I became so reduced and feeble," the lady writes, "that my daughter had to nurse me constantly. I could not get into or out of bed without her help. In the house, or to others, I was of no use at all. The doctor who attended me left nothing untried that he knew of; but, in spite of all he did, I grew worse and worse.

"Where I should have been to-day, whether in the land of the living or not, who can tell, if a kind Providence had not intervened to save me? In some way my husband heard of Mother Seigel's Syrup, and persuaded me to try it. I began taking it, and soon felt better. My appetite returned, and all kinds of food agreed with me. With plenty of nourishment I gained strength rapidly. The asthma and the bronchial trouble vanished, and almost before I could realise it, I found myself in the best of health, and have continued so to be ever since. For my remarkable and unexpected recovery I am under obligation to Mother Seigel's Syrup; and so I tell all whom I know.—Mary Rowlands, Deri, via Cardiff, August 31st, 1898."

One thing Mrs. Rowlands says in her letter which I have reserved for this place, namely, that she was a *dyspeptic*. Her system was weakened and her blood rendered impure by indigestion. That is the main point. *That is why she was open to the attacks of influenza, bronchitis, and asthma.* Her body castle being weak, the precious jewel of health was stolen.

Keep the digestion strong, and the blood clean and pure, by the frequent use of Mother Seigel's Syrup, and there will be no soil for the germs of disease to grow in. The system, thus guarded, protects the health as the walls and doors of the Tower hold safe the Crown jewels.

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Sorry to trouble you,

but to be forewarned is to be forearmed.

The general public

are hereby warned, if an effort is made by any retailer to induce them to take any other remedy when BEECHAM'S PILLS have been asked for, that

The article offered as a substitute

invariably carries more profit, and will not give the same satisfaction to the purchaser.

BEECHAM'S PILLS

have been before the public for over fifty years, and, in spite of all opposition, are to-day more popular than ever. The fact is, they recommend themselves.

Reader! buy what you want

when you want, and where you want, and do not be persuaded into buying what you do not want.

Avoid all experiments

with unknown so-called remedies, but adhere to BEECHAM'S PILLS, the bridge which has no doubt already carried you over many an anxious time.

In every minute particular

BEECHAM'S PILLS are always the same, being scrupulously mixed under the same supervision, and made of the best drugs procurable, with the most excellent machinery.

The manufactory at St. Helens

is a model of system and cleanliness, and the care bestowed on their manufacture ensures BEECHAM'S PILLS being always reliable.

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

20 MAPS FOR 2d. "PEARSON'S WAR ATLAS."

SHORT STORIES

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN

No. 586. FOR WEEK ENDING MARCH 24TH, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

The Merits of Guy's Tonic.

Taken immediately after each meal, Guy's Tonic mixes in the Stomach with the Food you have eaten, and helps to Digest it. It further stimulates a flow of Gastric Juice, and increases the efficiency of the Digestive Functions themselves.

Food is therefore enjoyed because Digestion is Easy and Natural. This does away with Pain and Discomfort after meals, Wind, Acidity, Heartburn, and Water-Brash.

Guy's Tonic gently compels a Sluggish Liver to greater Activity, whilst thinning and rendering less resinous the Bile in the Gall Bladder. This makes the Blood purer and freer from Biliary Poisons, so that the drag on the Energies and Depression of Spirits are removed, and you become more Buoyant, Cheerful, and Energetic.

The Digestion of Food in the small Intestine is also better and more completely performed when the Liver is rendered active and in good working order by the use of Guy's Tonic. You are thereby freed from the poisonous Gases bred by Decomposing and Undigested Food, which cause Flatulence and painful Distension. The natural Functions are also brought at the same time into a Healthy, Normal condition.

Testimony from a Medical Man.

"Milford, co. Donegal.

"Gentlemen,

"I enclose P.O., for which I request you to send "me by post Four Bottles of Guy's Tonic. I "have prescribed the Tonic to several people, who "have derived much Benefit from it, but I may "mention that all which I order myself is used "by my Wife.

"Yours faithfully,

"J. A. OSBORNE, M.D."

A new size (Six-Ounce) Bottle of Guy's Tonic, price 1s. 1½d., is now on Sale at all Chemists and Stores.

10/6 ALLEN FOSTER & CO., 10/6

SOLE MAKERS OF THE

"ALFOSCO" COSTUMES

BUY DIRECT AT FIRST COST FROM THE LEADING FIRM OF LONDON MANUFACTURERS.

ALLEN FOSTER & CO. have registered the word "ALFOSCO" in connection with their Costumes to distinguish them from the ordinary run of Goods advertised by Provincial and other Firms.

Design No. 256 **10/6**

Design No. 208. HALF-A-GUINEA. The New Century Costume, utterly unrivalled all the world over. This charming Costume is made in all the beautiful shades of the **Specialite Serge** and in the **Venetian Cloth,** two splendid wearing cloths. The Bodice has a full front, very tastefully trimmed with prettily-shaped revers of good velveteen, which are finished off with a smart edging of fancy braid. The Collar is of Velveteen, and trimmed to match front. The bodice and sleeves are lined. The Skirt is cut full. Costume complete, **10/6**; carriage, 6d. extra. Skirt alone, 5/6; carriage paid, 5d. extra.

Design No. 256. HALF-A-GUINEA. Ladies' Chesterfield Coat and Skirt, cut in the latest shape, and made in all the shades of **Allen Foster & Co.'s Venetian Cloth,** or in their **Specialite Serge,** two splendid wearing fabrics. The Coat can be worn open or closed. The Skirt is cut full with inverted pleat at back. Price only **10/6.** The Coat can be lined through for 3/6 extra; or Skirt lined linenette 2/6 extra.

Regular Stock Sizes of Costumes are 34, 36, 38 in. round bust (under arms), the Skirts being 38, 40, and 42 in. long in front. Larger and Special Sizes to customers' own measurements, 1/6 extra.

Design No. 208 **10/6**

ALL PATTERNS & SKETCHES POST FREE.

Design No. 256. Design No. 208.

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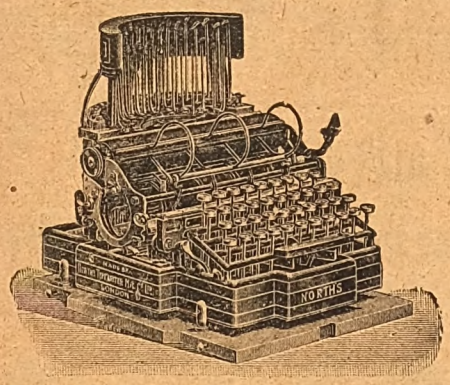

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SHORT STORIES

No. 586. ONE PENNY

For the Week Ending March 24th, 1900.

THE WONDLEFORD MYSTERY.

IT was a coincidence, and a very curious one, which brought those two men together at Wondleford.

Jim Banks used to say it was the "darnedest, rummiest start" that ever he had come across. Jim was there, too, in the capacity of the necessary outsider, and it was through him that the story became known, for Tony Blake, with his emotional Irish temperament, never cared to speak of that night's experience.

Tony had spent a night at Jim's father's station *en route* for one, two days' journey on, where a mob of cattle was awaiting him. Jim was anxious to go on the roads for a bit, and Tony was on the look-out for a man, so it was quickly arranged that the young fellow should go, and they made an early start next day, for the only good camping ground with food and water combined was a long forty miles away.

As they left the slip-rails of the home paddock a traveller, who had been camping on the creek, hove in sight. He was a tall, black-bearded man, with curiously white hair, shabbily dressed, and with the shaking hand of an habitual drunkard. As he was evidently making for Old Wondleford crossing too, it

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was only natural that he should join the other horsemen. Three is not company, as a rule, but, as the stranger preferred to ride along in silence a pace or two behind Banks and Blake, they were undisturbed by his presence.

Blake had taken up a selection adjoining Jim's birthplace, and Jim had heard him spoken of as a mad Irishman, who sold his selection for a song, and made tracks for the old country, where it was generally understood that he had found a fortune and spent it, turning up again years afterwards in Queensland on the droving tack, and bidding fair to stick to that particular line for life.

After dinner they left the grassy slopes and ring-barked paddocks of Banks's property, and got into a country of thick scrub and stony, barren ridges. Once they passed a hut in ruins, and then ran up against the remains of a kangaroo fence.

Tony followed the fence with his eye, as it sagged like a broken-backed snake across a dry swamp.

"What's come to Roper letting the fence get into this state?" he exclaimed. "It was in good repair—bran new, in fact—when I saw it last. I'll speak about it to him myself to-night."

Jim turned in his saddle, and stared into Tony's handsome, florid face.

"Speak to Roper to-night! Why, man, where have you been? Roper's been gone these ten years, and Wondleford deserted. Haw, Haw! Speak to Roper about his fences. Now that is good."

"Is that so?" said Tony. "Well, you see I never came up this way but once, and that's a matter of twelve years ago, just when I was making tracks for the nearest railway station—a good three hundred miles further off than it is now, my boy. I never got as far east as your father's place before, and for particular reasons I did not call in that time, but I remember the road all the same. So Roper is gone, and his pretty wife with him, I suppose? Ah, she was a jewel," and Tony sighed retrospectively.

"Mrs Roper!" cried Jim. "Gone; I should think she was, and a matter of two years before Roper went. By gum, Blake, did not you hear about her being murdered? It must have happened before you left. I was a nipper of ten at the time, but I remember how excited all the district was about it. You see it was never found out, and everyone used to feel a bit scarey for a time. There were no police nearer than Crow's Nest in those times, and just then they were after the chaps that stuck up the Crow's Nest gold escort. Do you remember that?"

"Oh, yes; it happened a week before I left. But I called in at Wondleford on New Year's Day. Mrs. Roper was at home, and right as could be; the prettiest, jolliest little woman I'd set eyes on for many a day. I'd heard that Roper was as jealous as a man could be over her, and didn't encourage visitors, so I was just as glad he wasn't there. Bad luck to those who harmed her; an' for what was it done, and what was Roper doing not to bring the murdering rogues to justice?"

"Oh, he couldn't do anything. They fired the house, and burnt everything, but it was proved that she had a bullet in her brain before she was burnt. There was another dead body, a man's, found too; he had been shot as well. Some thought he was the murderer, and had shot himself in remorse, but it was impossible to find out. One of Roper's horses, saddled and bridled, was standing in the stable to complicate matters more."

"An' what was Roper doin' to leave such a young thing alone?"

"Well, he had to go to an out-station, with all hands to put out a bush-fire and burn a boundary. He left a gin, who used to cook for them, with her, but Mrs. Roper took a fancy to get pie melons, and sent the gin out to One Mile Creek to get 'em, telling her to camp the night, and bring home some fish as well next morning. Instead of that, the gin marched off to the out-station, and hung about looking for melons there.

"The boss found her, and sent her straight back with a message to Mrs. Roper, saying he'd rather she did not stop alone; but the gin was frightened Mrs. Roper would be angry if she returned without the melons, so camped on the creek, and didn't get home till late the next day, to find Wondleford burnt to the ground, and the boss gone off for the police and for help. He had got uneasy, and gone home before daybreak—suspected the gin of tricks, I suppose. It was night, of course, when he got to our place. I remember seeing him—a tall chap with black hair and queer deep-set eyes. Mother said he was like a madman.

They left the grassy slopes and got into a country of thick scrub and stony barren ridges

"Then afterwards I used to hear 'em saying that he was drinking himself to death, and was letting Wondleford go to the dogs, and then he cleared out altogether, and no one knows what became of him, and fancy you never hearing about it. Why, man, where have you been?"

Tony laughed. "Well, I was at sea a week or so afterwards. Do you remember the date at all, or about when it happened?"

"New Year's night," said Jim promptly. "And you say you saw her on New Year's Day. Didn't notice any strangers about, did you?"

"Yes—that is—no, of course, but it must have been the time, because the gin was away, and Mrs.

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Roper got us some lunch herself. Poor little woman; poor pretty little thing."

Jim looked at him with bright unsympathetic eyes. "Why, you only saw her once," he said. "Anyway no one ever found out; a murderer isn't always discovered, you see."

"No, my lad, not when that murder was an act of justice, an eye for an eye, a soul for a soul, a—"

"What's up with you," said Jim, interrupting the rapid utterance of the stranger who had abruptly broken in upon his recital. "What do you know about it?"

"Nothing," said the man sullenly, dropping back a pace or two to his original position. "Only I've known murders that were justice, and that's the reason they're never found out. So put that in your pipe and smoke it, youngster."

Jim resented being called youngster above all things, and answered accordingly, but the black-bearded man was evidently not listening. Tony gave a sharp look at the vacant, deep-set eyes, and nudged Jim, tapping his forehead significantly. "The man's a bit of a pea-eater," he said, and Jim's wounded vanity was appeased.

He had more to tell yet, and returned to the murder theme, asking Tony if he was afraid of ghosts.

"Not afraid of 'em," said Tony. "But why do you ask; does the poor little woman walk?"

"Not that I know of, only there's a yarn that travellers sometimes see the homestead just as it was, before it was burnt. I've never camped here myself-but we may see it. Hope we do." A wish the Irish man did not echo.

A black thunder cloud was shadowing the west as the sun went down, but Wondle Creek, clattering and sighing over the stones, told them the journey was ended, and the travellers made for the grassy pleateau on the ridge, strange to say, the black-bearded man leading as straight as a pointer on the scent. He set about making a fire at once, and seemed inclined to do all the work, leaving the other two to stroll about and cut a few bushes for beds.

"The station ought to be down here," said Blake. "If that storm comes on it would be as well to have a roof over us. I suppose there's an outhouse or two standing?"

"Not a skillion even," said Jim. "It was only a small place, mostly under one roof, and the few outhouses soon fell to pieces. Father was past here a year ago, and he said——"

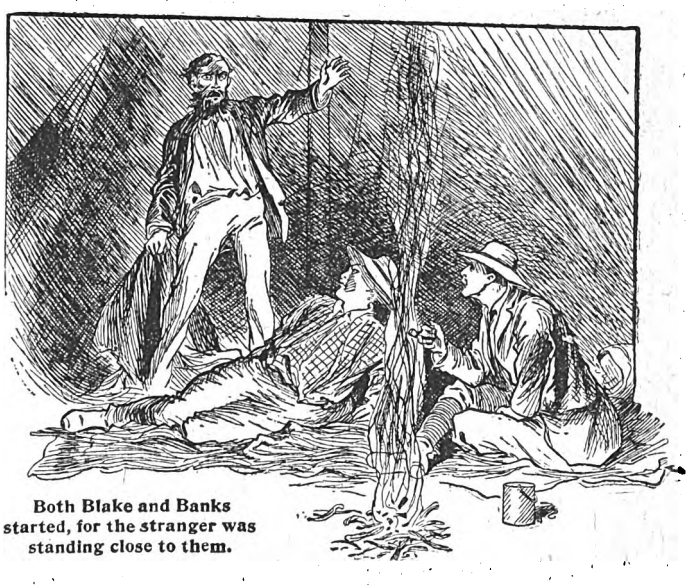
"You young rascal, what's been your game. It's meself would like to know?"

Blake had pushed through a screen of saplings and was gazing downwards. "Well, what do you call that?" he added.

Young Jim looked curiously across the little plain, through which Wondle Creek twisted like a silver ribbon.

"Rum—very rum," he said, after a pause.

Words which did not at all suit as descriptive of the scene before them. Dusk was already falling, but the long, low shingle roof, and the two tall chimneys of Wondleford-house could be plainly seen through the garden trees. Even the rails of the stockyard and the dark out-buildings were distinct enough, and a pretty picture it made against another green slope crowned with thick scrub as background.



Both Blake and Banks started, for the stranger was standing close to them.

As the men watched in surprised silence a moment, a big chestnut stallion dashed out of the shadow of the garden trees, followed by a troop of long-maned, flowing-tailed horses, and the thunder of their galloping hoofs brought Jim to himself.

"Brumbies," he said, briefly; "and brumbies don't flit in and out of gardens like tame birds. There's no house there."

"Will you bet?" said Blake.

"A quid," answered Jim.

"But you're a fool to do it. Look at 'em tearin' back again. If you watch you'll see 'em going up the hill to the scrub; through the hall door, I suppose," this with sarcasm.

Sure enough, when the wild horses had finished drinking, they made straight back, and went apparently through the garden—if not the house—but impetuous Blake was already down the ridge, and seeking for a crossing-place at the creek, before Jim could show a larger scorn.

The Irishman crossed on a fallen log, and ran quickly towards the garden.

It was growing dark very quickly, and there seemed to be no fences to bar his progress. A tangle of creeper stretching from a pine tree to a rose bush caused him to turn a little. The place was neglected certainly, scrub, oak, and other saplings springing up everywhere. Then he came across a knotted and twisted apple tree close against a charred and blackened post. Surely he remembered that, there used to be a slip of an apple tree against the back door? Mrs. Roper had told him to be careful not to let his horse near it that day; but somehow he had missed the house, and was out on the slope at the back, but there was the tall chimney and the shingle roof in front of him again. Once more he plunged into the shadowy garden; once more he struck the charred posts and the deformed apple tree; but, not to be beaten, he tramped about in all directions, finding nothing, however, and, thoroughly mystified, made the best of his way back to the camp and the triumphant Jim.

"Father would call it an optical illusion," said that

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worthy; "but I don't believe in meddling with that sort of thing. Cheer up; you're not the first that's been fooled. I'd like to send old sulky-face to look at it, only the sight would probably send him off his dot altogether; and we don't want to camp with a lunatic. Come and have your tea."

After it was over "sulky-face," as Jim had christened the stranger, rolled himself in his blankets, and apparently fell asleep. Blake and Banks smoked and talked a little longer, and the former grew communicative.

"Fact is, Banks," he said, "it did give me a turn to hear your yarn to-day. I've good reason to think I know whose that other body was, and he was a friend of mine. I might as well tell you the yarn, for it can't affect anyone now, and I don't know any more than you who the murderer was."

"Oh! there was someone with you then?" said Jim. "I thought as much."

"Yes, it was young Walter Benham — a ne'er-do-well brother of Mrs. Roper. He came to me the night before I was starting east. He had saved my life from blacks once, and I owed him a good turn. He was in the gold escort affair, more by ill-luck than any premeditated mischief, but he was wanted, of course, and had no way of getting a horse. He had written to his sister, telling her all, and asking her to get him a mount. Roper didn't approve of him, and so she was to keep it as dark as she could. I let him ride my pack mare, and disguised him a bit, and we made tracks for Wondleford, and by looking out well never met a soul. Naturally, as Benham had put me in an awkward position rather, I was anxious to get away as soon as I could before the police came this way, so I only stayed an hour at Roper's, and pushed on, leaving Benham to get away after dark, which I always supposed he did, for he had plenty of money, and meant to get off to America if possible.

"Now, it seems to me that he shared his sister's fate, because the saddled horse must have been his. I wonder if he was followed by some of the gang, and shot for fear he should inform; but then why was she murdered too?

"By George, he was a handsome lad, like her, but fair as she was dark, and I never saw two so fond of one another."

"Well," said Jim, slowly, "I don't know, but I think you should tell the police what you know. It's very likely the murder was committed by some of the escort robbers, and——"

"Good Heavens! Her brother! Her brother!"

Both Blake and Banks started, and sprang to their feet, for the stranger was standing close to them.

"What on earth's up with you now," said Jim, "can't you sleep without having nightmare?"

"Can you swear that on New Year's Day twelve years ago you left Mary Roper's brother with her at Wondleford—a brother she was fond of, whom she would kiss and caress and cry over? Can you swear, man—are you sure?"

As the stranger spoke he seized Blake's shoulder, and drew him round, so that he could look with his burning eyes straight into the Irishman's face.

"Sure, of course I'm sure. I knew Walter Benham at one time as well as I know myself; but what has it got to do with you?"

"I was Mary Roper's husband—that is all," said the man, loosening his grasp on the other's shoulder, and in the surprised silence which followed he turned and rushed away in the darkness.

"Well, I'm sugared!" said Jim Banks. "Fancy that pea-eater being Roper! But I swear I believe he's telling the truth. Twelve year's drink and a beard alter a man, but those queer eyes reminded me of something. It's him, right enough."

"Poor chap!" said Blake. "I must go after him. The storm will be on us in a minute. You give the tent pegs an extra drive, and I'll fetch him. I'm willing to tell anything I know—Why, what's that?"

A red glare in the western sky made them turn and run to the edge of the ridge. The stranger was standing looking downwards, close to the screen of saplings.

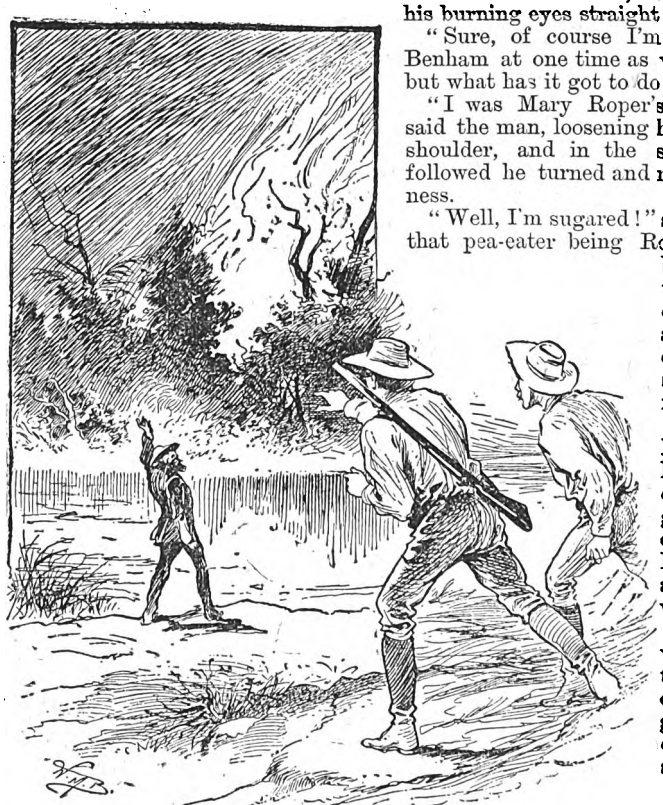
"Look!" he shouted wildly. "Look! False wife and broken vows! It was justice, only justice. Look!"

"Mad as a hatter," began Banks in an undertone, and then he stopped, open-mouthed, for the little creek was reflecting flames, and tongues of fire shot up above the trees, plainly showing against the shingle roof of the house on the plain. There was no mistake this time. A house was on fire, and there might be human beings in peril.

"Come along!" shouted Blake, and he sprang down the little slope towards the creek.

With a cry, the stranger followed, and outstripped him. Jim, more cautious, took his time.

It was pitch dark this side of the creek, and the glare of the fire dazzled his eyes. A peal of deafening thunder and a jagged flash of lightning added further to the disorder of the scene.



Roper stopped for a moment on the bank of the creek. "I cannot wait," he shouted.

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"Hi! Roper!" he shouted. "Not so fast; you know the lay of the country better than we do."

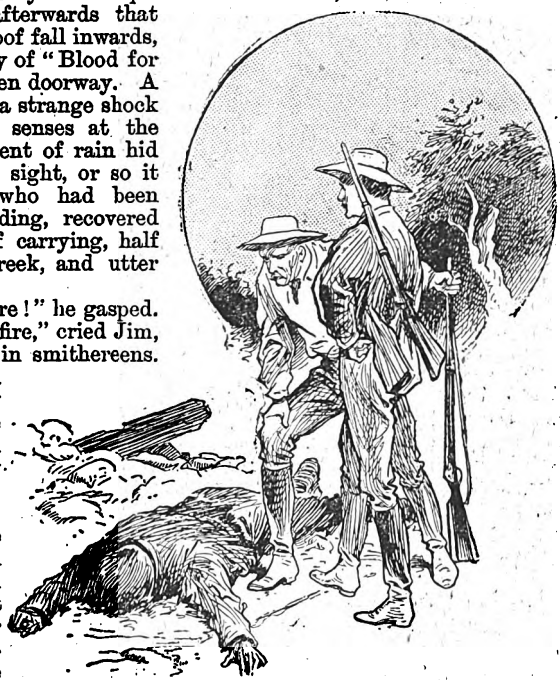
Roper stopped for a moment on the bank of the creek. "I cannot wait," he shouted. "Blood for blood! Don't you hear them calling?"

A minute afterwards Tony and Jim had waded through the shallow waters, and rushed towards the burning house. They were only a few paces behind Roper, and both declared afterwards that they plainly saw the red-hot roof fall inwards, just as Roper, with a wild cry of "Blood for Blood!" sprang in at the open doorway. A fearful crash of thunder and a strange shock deafened and stunned their senses at the moment, and a blinding torrent of rain hid house and garden from their sight, or so it seemed, for when Blake, who had been nearest to the burning building, recovered himself, Jim Banks was half carrying, half dragging him towards the creek, and utter darkness reigned.

"Roper—the house—the fire!" he gasped.

"There's no house and no fire," cried Jim, "nothing but an apple tree in smithereens. I'm off that lot. Roper can take care of himself. Any way, you don't catch me hunting lunatics through houses that ain't houses any more."

Half-stunned as he was, Blake allowed himself to be led back to the camp, and when the fury of the storm abated, with daylight, he went down with Jim to look for traces of the madman. Perhaps he had got into the scrub, with his wild fancies and poor tortured brain. Had they all been more or less demented the night before? for in the clear light of morning neither from the ridge nor anywhere else could a trace of the haunted station be seen! The creek babbled over the stones, the birds sang merrily among the trees of the old garden surrounding the few charred posts of the long-ruined homestead, and the sun sent bright shafts of light everywhere.



Face downwards amongst the crumbling soil lay the blackened singed body of a man.

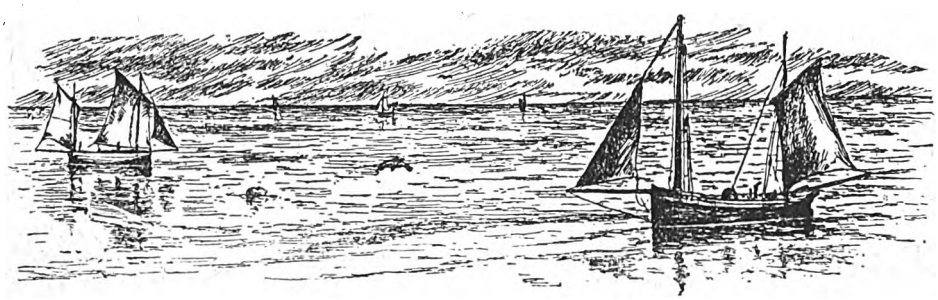
"Lightning!" said Jim, briefly, pointing to the splintered trunk of the apple tree. "Lucky for us we were out of its reach. Good Heavens! here's Roper."

Face downwards amongst the crumbling soil lay the blackened, singed body of a man, perhaps where twelve years ago those other two charred bodies had lain, on the hearthstone of the home, destroyed by his own hand. For, somehow, the truth came with a flash to both the men standing there, and they saw as in a dream the arrival of the maddened, jealous husband, the loving parting of the brother and sister, the stealthy figure, wild with hate and passion, and the eyes burning with the light of madness. That Roper had shot his wife and the lad with her, and in his frenzy had set fire to the house, they had no doubt. The final act of the tragedy—Roper's death—after his late discovery of his wife's innocence, they did not try to understand. It was only, as Jim Banks said "The rummiest start he'd ever come across, anyhow."

* * * * *

After the police had been informed, Roper's remains were interred by the creek, close to two other grassy mounds. Wondleford was quite an important place in the scantily settled district for a time, and several people interested in such things camped for a week on the ridge, in hopes of seeing the shingle roof and tall chimney-stack amongst the clump of trees on the plain, but from the night of Tony Blake's and Jim Bank's weird experience, I have never heard that it was seen again.

Ethel Mills.



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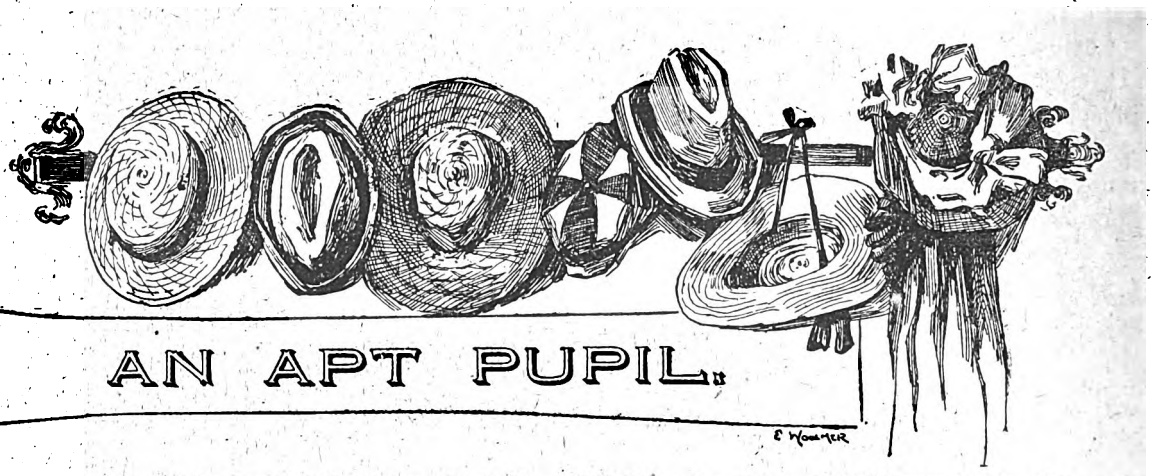

AN APT PUPIL.

When people heard the name of Professor Draycott they pictured to themselves a man past middle life, and they were surprised to find, on meeting the gentleman, that he was very little over thirty, and looked younger than that. He was indeed a young man to have attained to such a position as that which he occupied, but that naturally was all the more to his credit.

Draycott had obtained during the past year or two a reputation for curing complaints and diseases by means of hypnotism. He was a firm believer in that science, and occasionally delivered lectures on the subject. He had been invited to Whitelock, where mesmerism was having a vogue, to deliver a course of four lectures in the public hall, and he had managed to sandwich this course between two other courses which he was to deliver in different parts of the country. He was exceedingly pleased to have the opportunity of going to Whitelock, as that city was noted as a centre of intelligence, and he prophesied that hypnotism would make a great stride in public favour if he could succeed in making a hit there.

Three of the lectures had been given and he was now preparing to deliver the fourth. It was Saturday, and it would be necessary for him to leave Whitelock on Sunday afternoon in order to reach Malton, where he was to deliver another course, early on Monday.

In his concluding lecture, Professor Draycott always endeavoured to impress upon his audience a fact concerning which he himself had not the slightest doubt; this was that everybody possessed the power of hypnotism to a greater or less extent.

He was always enthusiastic about his subject and spoke in a tone that in many cases carried conviction with it, but on this occasion, having due regard to the important city in which he was endeavouring to propagate the science, he was actually preparing a short speech on this particular point in order that every word should tell.

The hall was a large one, but it was simply crowded on that Saturday evening. The professor was delighted; it proved how great was the interest excited on the previous evenings, and augured well for the future of hypnotism.

Draycott warmed to his work as he had never done before; he explained the theory and he gave practical examples of his power on various members of the audience who "honoured him by stepping up to the platform." Then came the final remarks.

With an earnestness that abundantly demonstrated his convictions, Professor Draycott told the audience that every one of them had this strange power latent within his or her being; that if it were developed it would enable each one to do much for the alleviation of suffering and the cure of disease in his own circle; and that everyone was under the moral obligation to cultivate the gift for the benefit of mankind. There were some, he told his hearers, who disputed his assertion, but it was perfectly true and they would find it so if they made up their minds to try.

It was late that night before the professor could woo sleep; his ears still rang with the plaudits of the audience at the conclusion of what had been a remarkable séance, and he was so elated with his success that it was a wonder he was able to sleep at all. But when unconsciousness did fall upon him, it lasted for many hours—for he was thoroughly exhausted with his efforts—and he slept until nine o'clock on the Sunday morning.

After breakfast he went for a long walk, returning to his hotel for luncheon at one o'clock. That repast finished, he set to work leisurely to pack his bag for the journey.

The course of lectures had been arranged on a somewhat peculiar basis so far as payment was concerned. He usually had his fee paid in advance, but as the proprietors of the hall at Whitelock had had some doubt as to the success of the venture the professor had agreed to accept a precentage of the money received for admission. This was paid to him at the close of the lecture on Saturday evening, and in cash.

The result had been far better than anyone had anticipated, and he found himself with £100 in notes and coin as his share of the proceeds. The notes he placed in his pocket-book, while the gold and silver—being heavy—he stowed away in his bag.

He had finished packing his bag and was looking round to see if he had forgotten anything, when a porter knocked at the door and handed him a card. It bore the name of Miss Dora Callan.

"The lady says that she would like to see you on a very urgent matter," said the porter deferentially.

"But I do not know this lady," returned Draycott, surveying the card with a perplexed air. "Are you sure she mentioned my name?"

"Yes, sir; she said I was to give it to Professor Draycott, the hypnotist," replied the man.

"Very well I will come down," said Draycott. And two minutes later he found himself bowing to a remarkably pretty young lady.

"You wish to see me on some urgent matter, I understand?" asked Draycott, when they were both seated. "We are, of course, strangers and I am wondering——"

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"Oh yes, I know you must be!" She spoke with some confusion, which seemed to add to her beauty. "I know it must seem—very—rude of me to disturb you, but I thought you could help me to cure someone."

She was very timid, but the professor rather liked that; he had never given much thought to the opposite sex, except to think that some of its members were very bold and forward, and this pretty face, rendered more bewitching by the shyness of its owner, was causing him to experience quite a new feeling.

"To cure somebody?" enquired Draycott, overcoming the tendency to forget science. "I shall be glad to assist you if it lies in my power. Let me know exactly what you mean."

The young lady explained in a somewhat hesitating manner as though she was still afraid that the great man might resent the intrusion, that her mother had been suffering for some time from ill-defined pains which it had been impossible up to the present to dissipate; that during the past week her sufferings had increased considerably and the medical man who attended her had been unable to alleviate them. The young lady had been present at the lecture on the preceding evening, and had heard the professor's remarks about the power of hypnotism being latent in everyone. This had suggested to her that she might be able to do something for her mother, if she could obtain information concerning the methods to be employed. How was she to go to work in order to exercise the power which, according to Draycott, she possessed? Once more she reminded the hypnotist of his remarks on that point, and concluded with a timid observation that perhaps he was not quite sure that everyone had the power.

Draycott felt just a little bit nettled at the idea of any doubt being cast upon his statement; he was also strangely stirred by the apparent timidity and the beauty of the young woman who sat facing him; and he was anxious both to prove that he was correct, and to do something to relieve the mother from pain. By helping the mother he would be doing a service to the young lady also, a thought which increased the peculiar feeling which he was experiencing.

"I am quite sure," he observed gently, yet firmly, "that you possess the power to a greater degree than many other persons. Your eyes shine with much brilliancy, and although you are somewhat timid at times, it is my belief that you are gifted with considerable will-power."

Unconscious'y, for the professor was not quite aware of what he was saying, he had spoken the truth; a close observation of the young woman's eyes revealed great strength of character. "This is how you proceed."

Draycott drew his chair a little nearer to hers, looked at her fixedly and began to make passes with his hand.

"You fix your eyes full upon those of the person whom you intend to hypnotise," he continued. "Then you make a few movements with your hands, just as I am doing, in order to confuse them. It is strange how effective these few movements are upon the minds of the ordinary individual. And the combined action upon the mind of these movements and the glare of the eye is remarkable, even in the case of a person who may claim to be fairly strong-minded. Only when a person deliberately makes up his mind that he will not be mesmerised is the action of these two methods rendered null; on the other hand, if the patient is willing or is unconscious of what is about to be done, the result is certain."

"Oh, thank you so much!" said Miss Callan in a tone that was full of gratitude. "I feel sure that I shall be able to send my mother off. Your lucid explanation has quite cleared away the doubts I entertained. Now let me see. Had I not better go through the movements here, so that you can see whether I do them correctly? But perhaps I am taking up too much of your time. Oh dear! I have been here quite a long time already and I am afraid that I have been very rude in thus bothering you."

"Not at all!" Draycott hastened to assure her, and he did it with a warmth that would have surprised all his scientific friends. His face was animated, though there was a slight flush on his cheeks and in appearance he was very different from the cool, studious-looking man of science who posed as the apostle of hypnotism. "This has been a very pleasant experience for me—very pleasant indeed! and I am charmed to have the opportunity of propagating the science and conferring immediate benefit upon a human being at the same time. By all means make the experiment and I will correct you if you are wrong."

Draycott shifted his chair still a little nearer to Miss Callan and lay back with an air of great contentment, as though he were a patient willing to be operated upon. This was decidedly a pleasant experience, he had never gone through anything like this before, and he caught himself wondering dreamily whether a bachelor's life was really the blessed condition which he had hitherto imagined it. Just imagine what it must be to have a partner for life similar to the girl who was now gazing at him with those glorious eyes! How pretty she looked! And how deftly she moved those dainty little hands in front of his face! He felt half tempted to grasp them and ask her to be his wife. That would have been rather sudden, but Draycott believed in quick decisions.

He tried to tell her that she was performing her task splendidly, but the words would not come; his eyes were kept fixed by the glare of hers—yes, it was really a glare. In a dazed manner he recognised that she was exercising the mesmeric influence over him and he felt pleased; he would tell her afterwards how the gleam from her eyes had fascinated him, how the pretty face with its slightly flushed cheeks had enchanted him, how splendidly she had understood what he had explained to her about the movements and all the rest of it.

"Now," said Miss Dora Callan, two minutes later, "I think we can proceed to business. How much money did you get out of your lectures?"

"Just over £100," replied the hypnotised Professor.

"Ah! I thought it would have been a little more than that," continued Miss Callan, "and where is that money?"

"The notes are in my pocket-book, but the gold and silver are in my bag," came from the lips of Draycott.

"It was rather a foolish arrangement about the manner of payment," resumed Miss Callan pleasantly. "It got into the papers you see, and it made people say that if you were so devoted to science, you ought not to have worried about such trifles as fees. Kindly give me your pocket-book."

Draycott did as he was bid, and Miss Callan quietly extracted the notes and handed the pocket-book back to its owner.

"Now I will trouble you to go up-stairs and fetch your bag. It would not be quite the proper thing, or I would prefer to accompany you or even to get the bag myself. But you had better bring it down into this cosy

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little reception room which, fortunately, we have entirely to ourselves."

Professor Draycott left the room without the least show of resistance and returned in due course with his bag. Miss Callan quietly locked the door on the inside, and then requested the professor to find the money and hand it to her. The hypnotised man did as he was told.

"Thank you." Miss Callan smiled pleasantly as she took five sovereigns from the bag containing the gold and let them fall among the professor's papers and clothing in his travelling bag.

"You will want some money for your journey. I understand that you leave by the 5.30 train this afternoon?"

Draycott nodded assent.

"Very well. I will write a short note which will explain to you what has happened, otherwise you may be inclined to blame the hotel authorities for the loss of your money when you wake up."

She took up a pen and wrote a few lines rapidly on one of the sheets of paper that lay on the table. When she had finished she sealed it in an envelope and addressed it to Professor Draycott.

"Take this and go back to your room, where you are to remain in this condition until five o'clock. You will just have time to catch your train, and I shall be out of your reach."

With a smile of intense satisfaction and a pretty bow, Miss Callan turned her back on Draycott, unlocked the door and walked out.

When Professor Draycott came to his senses at five o'clock, he gazed in bewilderment at the envelope which he still held. Rising from his chair he looked about him in an endeavour to explain to himself how it was that he felt so confused.

"I must have been asleep," he murmured. "How did this letter come here and who brought it?"

The simplest way to solve the mystery was to open the letter, and, as a man of science Draycott recognised the fact. He cut the envelope and began to read.

The note told him what had happened on that eventful afternoon, and it further explained that the writer, being sadly in want of money, had hit upon the bold idea of hypnotising the professor himself and relieving him of the proceeds of his lectures.

Fortune and a pretty face had enabled her to carry out her plan successfully.

"You ought to be greatly pleased," the writer concluded, "at this proof of the accuracy of your views, and at having so apt a pupil. I do not know whether we shall ever meet again, probably not; but neither of us is likely to forget the experience of this afternoon. It was pleasant to me, and I am convinced that you found it equally agreeable—at least, at the beginning."

Draycott examined his pocket-book and then his bag. It was perfectly true, he had been robbed by a pretty and daring female thief; he was too much a scientist to spend useless time in giving vent to his vexation and indignation; he was convinced that he had been hypnotised by the young woman who had called upon him, and that the hotel people were not to blame for any act of dishonesty on the part of an employée. Then he suddenly remembered his train.

The thoughts of the learned man were not agreeable ones as he travelled towards the town where he was to stay the night, and from which he would take an early morning train to Malton, but it is impossible to conjecture what they would have been had he known that Miss Callan, much disguised, was a passenger in the same train. When he alighted at his destination, he lingered on the platform and watched the train as it left the station to continue its journey. He was just turning away as the last coach passed him, when a woman's voice uttered the words: "Good night, Professor Draycott."

He started and stared. The voice was familiar and the mocking tone was significant. Then it came to him—it was his afternoon visitor.

The train was gone. He might have made an attempt to catch her, but he really had very little positive proof to convince a judge and jury that she had taken the money, and just think of the ridicule that would be heaped upon him for having allowed himself to be caught in that way.

Professor Draycott's friends have remarked that he has ceased to allude in his lectures to a fact which he formerly emphasised, namely, that every human being possesses the power of hypnotism.

G. Day.

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SILKY OF THE GUARDS.

On the regimental muster roll his name was inscribed as Second Lieutenant the Honourable Eustace Borrowdale. To his brother officers, he was known by the less portentous appellation of "Silky"; while Society—by whom he was much in request, both because of his acres and his inches—affixed the distinguishing title of —"of the Guards."

From what source the nickname had sprung, was never made quite clear. Possibly it arose from his behaviour on the occasion of a visit to the "International Sporting," when Miles Dogherty—the Limerick heavy-weight—knocked out Sam P. Simpson—the Bowery champion—after a fight lasting through ten rounds, with much damage to the Transatlantic worthy's visage—"tapping his claret," and "bringing up his peepers," in a manner worthy of the best traditions of the "noble art."

Instead of going into ecstasies over the capacity of the one to endure punishment, and the science displayed by the other, "Silky" was heard to remark, that it was a beastly exhibition, "by Jove!" and he was proceeding to express his regrets, that he had allowed himself to be inveigled—into witnessing such a display of pure savagery, when a deadly pallor crept over his face, bringing his remarks to an abrupt termination, and himself to the ground in a dead faint.

Conduct such as this could not—in the eyes of the half-dozen veterans of the regiment who accompanied him—be anything else but chicken-heartedness—absolutely appalling in a chap who had chosen the service for a vocation.

To these seasoned warriors, who had seen men's blood flow like water amid the iron hail and clashing steel of many a hard-fought field, the lad's nausea at the sight of a prize-fighter's face reduced to the appearance of pulpy liver, was incomprehensible.

What wonder, then, that old Brodrick, the senior major, who considered such conduct little short of a disgrace to the regiment, growled out: "The boy will do no good in the service. He's as soft as silk."

It is very probable that the cognomen originated thus, for the story of the lieutenant's squeamishness afforded amusement at the mess-table for many a night to come. On the other hand, the young fellow's feminine voice and shy, nervous manner—he was barely twenty-two—might have had something to do with it.

While yet again, the small head, with its close-cropped, but still curling ringlets of silky golden hair, the blue eyes, the smooth, fair skin, delicate as a woman's—all so absurdly out of place, set, as they were, on a pair of shoulders, and stalwart form of a very Hercules—might have been responsible. Whether "Silky" had his own ideas upon the subject was never known. Certainly, at first, when so addressed, his cheek would flush hotly, and an expression of annoyance creep into his eyes, but gradually as time passed, he appeared to become indifferent.

Yet he was anything but effeminate in his habits. He had shot big game in Africa, stalked deer in the raw of the morning in Scottish Highlands, and in the hunting-field—heavy weight as he was—had invariably been found in the first flight—he, and his big bay—Roger—taking fences and stone walls in a manner worthy of Galway itself.

And no one among the subalterns had passed more rapidly through the hands of the drill sergeant than he; while the true cavalry man's seat in the saddle seemed to come to him by instinct. As a swordsman, too, the regiment were bound to admit that "Silky" would be bad to beat.

When the cloud—as yet no bigger than a man's hand, yet, to the far seeing, charged with the very thunderbolts of Jove—loomed over the Transvaal, and rumours of the probability, in the event of hostilities, of certain of the Household troops being called into requisition leaked out, there were many among the officers who whispered that the great Borrowdale interest would be put into motion to transfer "Silky," into a home-staying battalion.

Yet the cloud grew larger, spreading over the Free State, and casting a black shadow across the whole of South Africa, and still "Silky's" seat at the regimental mess-table remained filled.

So, too, during the phases which followed, from the issuing of the insolent ultimatums, to the calling out of the reserves, and the momentous day, when, as part of the composite regiment, he, and others of his brigade, received orders to prepare for active service.

Indeed that night, when toasts were drunk in honour of the brave soldiers holding the forts in far-off Natal, at Mafeking, at Kimberley and Rhodesia, there were none who drank deeper than "Silky," or whose eyes sparkled more brightly, or showed greater apparent gratification at the prospect of taking his share in the defence of the Empire.

Only when the moment of embarkation came, and he had said "good-bye" to a grey-haired lady, who had called him again and again "her darling boy," and besought him to run no unnecessary risks, for her sake —"for her sake"—did "Silky" betray emotion. Then indeed he broke down.

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As the tender moved off, indifferent to the thousand eyes upon him, he leant—white and trembling—against the bulwarks, watching the bowed figure on the receding dock, while the tears streamed in a very torrent down his cheeks.

There were many white, drawn faces round him, as they looked on what perhaps might be their last, on those who were nearest and dearest to them—yet none so broken-hearted as "Silky."

Old Brodrick, with the remembrance of their visit to the "International Sporting," still in his mind, and whose breast was as impervious to emotion as his cuirass, could not resist expressing himself upon the subject to the Colonel standing at his side.

"That lad will want watching," he observed. "Ten to one he'll get scared, and show the white feather the first time we get under fire."

"The old man"—as his soldiers called him—looked hard at the lad. Then, tugging nervously at his grey moustache, and with a suspicious mist creeping over his keen, grey eyes, he replied shortly:

"I don't agree with you. That boy is not ashamed to show natural grief, and I take that as a good sign. To me, that requires more courage, in a place like this, than to ride on a park of artillery. I know that kind of lad. They shake and tremble at the start of the action, but when they warm to the work, they are capable of deeds that old soldiers, such as you or I, Brodrick, would shrink from. Remember your own youth, Major; you've been a soldier so long that you appear to have forgotten what it is to be a man."

The white cliffs of Albion grew faint in the distance.

The Major accepted this rebuke in silence, only shaking his head doubtfully as he turned away.

So the great transport sailed, and the white cliffs of Albion grew faint in the distance, then faded away.

Day and night, under the impulse of the great revolving screws, the heavily-laden trooper ploughed her way toward the war-torn continent.

The heights of Table Mountain loomed large on the horizon. Troops and stores were landed, then, once more, the troopship—carrying details for Natal, of which "Silky's" troop was one—steamed out of the bay and made for Durban.

Then the rush commenced. Men and horses, guns and ammunition were hurriedly entrained and sent to the front. A few busy days, when hours seemed but as seconds, passed.

The eve of a great battle arrived, and then morning dawned; the moment was at hand when "Silky" was to give proof as to whether his Major's fears or his Colonel's confidence would be justified.

Yes! The time had come!

For hours the field artillery had plied their guns upon the rugged kopje behind the shelter of which the Boer force was entrenched, every boulder covering a marksman, every hillock disclosing a rifle barrel.

The enemy's guns had been silenced, and under cover of the confusion and dismay, caused by our well-planted shells, the infantry had advanced to the assault.

Undaunted by the storm of bullets which fell round them like hail, unchecked by the constant dropping of men, they had crept up and up.

A fierce hurrah as the summit was gained; loud cries of vengeance; shrieks for mercy; wild oaths; the whip-like cracking of the officers' service revolvers; then the cold chink, chink, as the British bayonets swept aside the feeble parry of the clubbed Mausers, and bit deep in the Dutchmen's flesh.

Afterwards the wild cheer of triumph, as the enemy lost heart, and taking to their horses, streamed over the veld, scattered like deer, by the resistless onslaught of the despised "Rooibatjes."

Yes, the time had certainly come!

To make the rout complete, the cavalry must pursue the retreating commandoes, and, if possible, take their guns.

Instinctively each man gripped his sabre hard, and gathering up his reins, settled himself firmly in the saddle—drawing a long breath, as if he thought it might be his last.

The officers glanced at their men—forgetting in their anxiety for them, to look at each other. Though, had they done so, they would have learnt nothing, for each and all were deadly pale—some from intense excitement—others from a swift reflection of home, and dear ones, from whom they were going, perhaps, to be cut off for ever.

It was fortunate for "Silky" that his brother officers were so engaged, for the feeling of deadly fear, which had come over him at the commencement of the action, when he received his "baptism of fire," had now increased tenfold. His hand trembled so, that but for the swordknot at his wrist, the weapon would have fallen to the ground.

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His knees had lost all grip upon the saddle, and only by the instinct of balance, given by long practice, did he keep his seat. His face was livid.

"Good heavens!" he thought. "I am a coward!"

To the young fellow, scion of a race of warriors, whose names were written large in the glorious page of England's dead heroes, the thought was torture.

Yet deny it he could not. He did not, he felt, so much fear death, although, so far he had found life very sweet, still the feeling of indefinable terror was each moment increasing.

"Close up! Trot! Gallop!"

For a space, the voice of his Colonel ringing out like a trumpet, the jingle of accoutrements, the bounding gallop of his horse, the wild shouts of the men, at whose flank he rode, the necessity of keeping his eyes fixed on his commander, who, a horse length ahead of his men, by the repeated sweep of his sword arm, indicated an increase of speed, made him oblivious to all, and he rode as one in a dream.

A riderless horse dashed past him.

But as the heavy forms, and unkempt, rugged faces of the enemy, who had turned sullenly at bay with their machine guns and Mausers raining death upon them, came into view, and the wild trumpet sounded the charge, the feeling of sickening dread overtook him once more.

The regiment had extended its formation. Now the men, deploying right and left, each fixed in his mind's eye his adversary, and rode down upon him at the full speed of his charger.

"Silky" was alone in their midst, forgotten! Involuntarily checking his horse, he glared round him, searching for a means of escape.

Spat! A sound such as might have been made by a stick striking a wet cloth; the gallant horse which had carried him so nobly, staggered beneath him, plunged madly forward in a last desperate effort to overtake his stable companion—now a dozen lengths ahead—then fell prone to the earth, hurling him from the saddle, far out upon the veld.

"Was he hurt?" he asked himself. "No!"

Then fortune had favoured him!

Where he lay, a slight rising in the almost dead level of the veld, sheltered him from the rifle fire. He was in comparative safety. Luckily, too, he had struck against a pebble or something in his fall, which had raised a lump upon his forehead. He decided to remain where he was, assuming insensibility. Should the charge—as was practically certain—prove successful, he would be picked up by the bearer corps, who would suspect nothing. If, on the other hand, as had frequently happened before, the Boers had retreated merely to lead the cavalry into an ambuscade, he would be taken prisoner. Under the circumstances, he would prefer the latter. He would be safe there!

Imprisonment at Pretoria was not a pleasant prospect, but was better, after all, than the dangers of the campaign. So he reasoned, while the sound of whistling shots—the whir-r-r of the machine guns—and the shouts and yells of the combatants, died away in the distance.

Then came the re-action, the contemplation of his own cowardice.

Through his closed eyes, he seemed to see the figures of his dead ancestors, contemplating him with scornful looks—even the gentle face of his mother, who had begged him to be careful for her sake, appeared to be looking at him reproachfully.

He thought of his brother officers—those gallant fellows with whom he had spent so many happy hours—of his grey-haired Colonel, now far ahead; all fighting for their lives, while he, who should have been at their sides, was lying there in safety, and lastly, came the thought of his soldier's oath—of his duty to his Queen and country.

It was agony! He would have given empires to retrieve his act. But the die was cast—there was no joining them now!

Stay! What was this?

A sound of galloping hoofs—of ringing scabbards—a trooper of his regiment galloped past him—his head bare and bleeding from a ghastly wound in the neck, and his face white with fear.

Another followed—then three riding abreast—half a dozen—twenty! What was this? A retreat?

Borne on the moaning wind, which was springing up, he heard the words: "A trap! Every officer down!"

He saw it all like a flash. The Boers, acting on their usual tactics, had fallen back on a strong force held in reserve. The officers of the regiment had been picked off, and the men, leaderless, had been seized with panic.

A burning desire, not only to retrieve his own self-respect, but his regiment's prestige, a fierce yearning to avenge the deaths of his brave comrades, sprang up in his breast.

The warrior spirit of his race, the indomitable repugnance of the Englishman to acknowledge defeat, awoke, and he leapt to his feet.

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A riderless horse just then was dashing past him.

To seize its trailing rein, and leap into the saddle, was, to the guardsman, the work of a minute. With a torrent of wild shouts, and, in his excitement, fierce oaths, to gather his terror-stricken men round him, was the work of another; then regaining courage from their young leader, they dashed down anew upon the foe.

There was no resisting their mad onslaught. A few moments of hard work, and they were through, only to reform, and charge again. Singling out the leader, a man of note among them, "Silky" slew him with his own hand. Then with helmet off, and his golden ringlets blowing hither and thither in the breeze—wounded in a dozen places, yet feeling none—he hacked and hewed his way among them, like a very demi-god of war.

Like the white plume of Henri of Navarre his golden head was to his men, a very oriflame, and soon, shouting that the British rooineks were devils, not men, the stubborn Boers—those there were left of them—melted over the darkening veld like dew before the morning sun.

To pursue the remnant into the now rapidly falling darkness, was, as "Silky" realised, but to court disaster, and re-forming his men, he turned to ride back to the camp.

As he picked his way through the dead and dying, lying in every imaginable posture round him, a familiar form caught his eye, and he leapt from the saddle, and placed his hand upon the wounded man's heart. At the touch, the keen, grey eyes opened, regarding him in a dazed, wondering way, and the Colonel—for it was he—sat up and looked about him.

"Where am I? What has happened?" he asked.

"Silky" stood silent; his face flushing painfully, his eyes fixed upon the ground.

Before the eyes of his chief, the remembrance of his former act filled him with shame.

The old man placed his hand to his forehead, from which the blood was oozing, and continued brokenly:

"I remember, but,"—with a puzzled look—"where did you get to? Someone said they saw you shot down as we got to close quarters."

Still silence from "Silky," who felt ashamed to speak.

But from a trooper, who had drawn near to aid his officer: "The Lieutenant was knocked over, sir, at the first rush. I saw him and his horse go down myself, and see," calling attention to "Silky," now reeling from the loss of blood, "he's been hit more than once. But," with intense admiration—"he's a plucked one, he is, sir, and no mistake, though we did think him soft. When you and the other officers went down, sir, we got badly scared, and I'm ashamed to say it, but it's true, sir, we bolted. But for Lieutenant 'Silky,' sir," in his excitement, the worthy private used the familiar name, "it would have been a bad day for the 1st Life. We'd a never dared hold up our 'eads in Pall Mall again, sir. But he rallied us like a man, and," modestly contenting himself with a sweeping gesture, at the bloodstained ground round them. "Well, you see the result, sir. They won't call us carpet soldiers no more in London, I reckon!"

"You saved the honour of the regiment."

The Colonel, whose wound was fortunately superficial, staggered to his feet, and grasped the young officer's hand.

"My dear fellow!" he said. "You have saved the honour of the regiment, but it was only what I expected, though there were those amongst us, who, alas! have fought their last fight, who said you would show the white feather in the fight."

The young fellow could contain himself no longer, and blurted out the truth.

"So you see, sir, they were right after all," he concluded brokenly.

"I'm hanged if they were!" growled a voice, as its owner, limping painfully, and with a deep sword cut over the head, which made him almost unrecognisable, extricated himself from under a dead charger, close at hand.

"A chap, who has the courage to make a confession like that, is no coward. I was wrong, and you right. Colonel, see that he gets the Cross."

"*Captain* Borrowdale shall have it, Major!" was the reply.

And he did!

Hubert Bartlett.

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From the Snare of the Fowler.

THE great ocean steamship, homeward bound, was shearing her way through the waves at the rate of twenty odd miles an hour, and her passengers, scattered up and down the deck, were making the most of the evening light before the dinner bell should summon them below. Two young men, cigarette in mouth, were watching another couple, a man and a woman, who stood leaning over the rail of the ship at a little distance. The man was gazing with an expression of rapt admiration into his companion's eyes—very fine eyes they were, too, of a deep sea blue, and well worthy of all the admiration that Reginald Oldroyd had in his power to offer.

It was evident that a conversation of more than usual importance was being carried on between the two, for the lady hastily turned away her face, gazing silently over the broad Atlantic, whenever any one strolled that way.

"Did you ever see such a young idiot?" said one of the smokers, indicating with the lift of an eyebrow the young couple at the rail.

"Don't know, I'm sure. Seems to be enjoying himself," said the other, flicking the ash off his cigarette.

"I knew Reggie at school, and even at that age one could see that he was just the sort of fellow to make a fool of himself over a woman."

"Oh, my prophetic soul!"

"He thinks that he is a man of the world, and he is as easily taken in as a child. I bet you he has swallowed every word that woman has crammed him with, and if he is not delivered in some miraculous manner, ten to one he will end by marrying her."

"And why not?"

"He will find himself in Queer Street if he does. Old Simon Oldroyd, his uncle, would cut him off with sixpence if he were to bring Mrs. Vavasour to Oldroyd Hall, and the poor fellow has nothing to fall back upon. Besides, the woman is really impossible. She is a *divorcée*, and I daresay she is coming to Europe with no other object than to cover up her past and provide for her future by marrying some rich young cub with more muscles than brains, and more money than muscles."

"Why don't you say all this to the man most interested?"

"So I will, after dinner to-night."

"Do you mean to do that?"

"I must. I could never face Reggie's mother again, if I were to see the poor fellow blundering on to his fate without interposing a word to save him."

If the speaker had at that moment been looking at his friend, he would have seen something like a suppressed smile hovering about the corners of his mouth. But Herbert Merivale was one of those happy people who have unlimited faith in the efficacy of their own sermons, and he seized the next opportunity of opening his mind to his friend.

Oldroyd was a giant of a fellow, tall and broad, with close-cropped yellow hair, and a fat good-natured smile. His smile vanished, however, as soon as the subject of his friend's address became clear to him. A frown that looked almost like the scowl of a petulant schoolboy, gathered upon his face. He listened in silence for some time, but at length he growled out:

"Drop it, Merivale!" in a tone there was no mistaking. "I know all you can tell me about that. I know that the facts have been grossly misrepresented. I have it on the best authority. Mrs. Vavasour's husband behaved like a blackguard. She is well rid of such a brute, and I am perfectly convinced—in fact, I may say I know—that from first to last in that wretched business Jul——I mean, Mrs. Vavasour, was not in the least to blame. And remember this, old man, if you and I are to remain friends, you must never breathe another word against the good name of that lady. Heavens, man! is the voice of slander to be taken for the sentence of a judge? Is it enough to accuse a woman for her to be deemed guilty? Is that your idea of justice? Merivale, I am ashamed of you!"

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"You quite mistake me, my dear fellow," said Merivale placidly. "I brought no accusation against the lady. I merely mentioned some facts which are common knowledge, having been proved before the Divorce Court of Dacotah——"

"They divorce people for absolutely nothing in those regions!" interrupted Reggie.

"I dare say. I was merely asking you to look at the matter from a practical point of view. What will your uncle say to a marriage of this kind?"

A sensation as of a stream of ice-cold water ran down the young man's spinal column as those words entered his ears. Here was the fell shadow that had been haunting the chambers of his mind ever since he had first known that he was madly in love with Julia Vavasour. But Reggie did not care to discuss these matters even with an old friend like Merivale.

"I have no doubt that when my uncle knows Mrs. Vavasour he will admire her as much as I do," he said firmly. "But at any rate, would you not advise me to turn my back upon a woman just when she most needs the hand of—of a friend? That is not your idea of chivalry, is it, Merivale?"

"Reggie, you don't mean to say that you are such an idiot that you have gone and got engaged to that woman?" burst out Merivale.

Oldroyd withdrew his arm from that of his friend, and turning round confronted him in the moonlight. Merivale saw that his face was very pale.

"I must ask you not to speak in that way of the lady again," he said. "Mrs. Vavasour, who is in every possible way my superior, has at last consented to be my wife. I had not intended to mention the fact as yet, and I trust that you will regard this as said in confidence, but the fact is so, and—and won't you wish me joy, old man?" he concluded, his voice changing all of a sudden.

"I wish I could, but I can't —not in the way you mean," said his friend, and there the unsatisfactory conversation came to an end.

Of course the engaged couple were continually together, and the secret of their betrothal was a very open one indeed. They provided a gratis entertainment for the rest of the passengers, without being in the smallest degree conscious of the fact—at least, if the lady knew it, she concealed her knowledge admirably.

"I must go to Oldroyd Hall first, and prepare my uncle for the good news," said the enamoured Reginald as they parted at Liverpool. "I am sure it won't be long before you get an invitation to the Hall. If you aren't asked I won't go there again, let my mother say what she likes," added the young man with an air of defiance.

"Hush, my own! How can your uncle, or your mother (who, I am certain is the sweetest old lady in existence), like me till they have seen me? Don't be ridiculous, you foolish boy!"

"Do you know, Julie, I know it is very sweet and affectionate of you, and all that, but I would rather you didn't call me that quite so often. It makes a man feel ridiculous."

"My darling, as if there were a name on earth good enough and dear enough for you!"

Reginald would have kissed her on the spot, but there was no opportunity for an embrace, and he had to content himself with looking unutterable things.

Mrs. Vavasour was bent on seeing the Lake country, and Reggie insisted on staying behind to see her off to Penrith, while Merivale took the express to town, carrying the news with him.

* * * * *

A week went by, and seven honey-sweet love-letters had passed between the lovers. There was a great deal of affection but very little information in Reggie's epistles. The lady gathered, however, that the dreaded uncle had been informed of the fact of the engagement; but no invitation to Oldroyd Hall was forthcoming.

One afternoon as Mrs. Vavasour was reclining on the top of her bed—a luxury she was fond of enjoying after lunch—a knock came to her door. She jumped up and opened it, and there stood a waiter with a card on a salver. She snatched it up, and the colour rushed into her face as she read—Major Oldroyd—Horse Guards Club, Pall Mall, S.W.

She slipped half-a-crown into the man's hand.

"Take the gentleman into the little drawing-room, and try to manage so that we shan't be disturbed," she said to him with a smile.

She knew that male servants were always her slaves —with servants of her own sex it was otherwise—and she had little fear that the interview, on which so much was to depend, would be interrupted. For a moment Mrs. Vavasour stood before the mirror, and as she touched up her stray curls she looked into her own eyes and smiled. She thought that she would be equal to the subduing of Major Oldroyd. Certainly she was a remarkably pretty woman, with a delicate, pale complexion, dark silky hair, and the loveliest blue eyes in the world. Her nose, with its dainty tilt at the end, her cheeks, and her chin, were all bewitching. With a satisfied sigh she turned away from the mirror and went down to the little drawing-room.

A tall man with a military carriage stood at the further end of the room. He bowed stiffly as the lady entered, and then stood upright, as though he had been on parade.

"My nephew tells me he is engaged to you," began the Major abruptly, scarcely waiting till Mrs. Vavasour had seated herself. "I thought I might as well run down and tell you how things stand. It would be a cruel kindness to lead you to suppose that the marriage can ever take place. The fact is, my nephew has not a penny of his own in the world, and for him to get engaged was a piece of childish folly. I trust, madam, that you will look at the matter in a sensible light. You can't——"

"Sir, you are—you are too cruel!" murmured the lady, and she proceeded to cry in the most charming manner possible. The Major, frowning and uncomfortable, strutted up and down at the other end of the room, casting now and then sheep's eyes at the weeping figure on the sofa.

"My dear lady, don't—pray don't cry like this," he said, at last. "My nephew is a very decent young fellow, but, upon my word, you know, he isn't worth it."

At this the lady fired up.

"Do you suppose, sir," she exclaimed, "that a woman cannot be influenced by any but mercenary motives? Do you suppose I accepted your nephew for what he had to give me?"

"Certainly not, my dear madam. And the proof of it is that he has nothing in the world to give. But why should we not be friends, though we have a difference of opinion? Reginald, you know, is little more than a boy."

It was awkwardly expressed, but Mrs. Vavasour caught the Major's meaning, and smiled faintly.

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"He is certainly very young," she murmured, "perhaps by-and-bye you will not refuse your consent to our engagement."

"No, madam, don't ask me to do that!" said Major Oldroyd; but the tone in which this was said was not by any means so austere as the words, and the lady blushed a little as she met the Major's eye.

The waiter had done his best, but he could not keep the other guests out of the room more than a few minutes. One or two ladies came in, and Major Oldroyd and Mrs. Vavasour affected to be engaged in an ordinary conversation, which they kept up for some time. They met at dinner, and after dinner they strolled side by side by the margin of the lake, and the subject of Reginald and his matrimonial hopes was not once mentioned between them.

The next day, and the next, the Major continued to be a guest at the hotel, and Mrs. Vavasour came to the conclusion that he was as much in love with her as ever his nephew had been. It was scarcely wonderful if the thought occurred to her—Why throw away the substance for the shadow? Why hang on to the nephew, and marry a man who might turn out a pauper, when she might become at one stroke the lady of Oldroyd Hall and the adjoining territory? Would it not be better, on the whole, to be Reginald's aunt than his wife?

As the uncle's attentions became more marked this view of the matter appealed more and more strongly to the practical nature of Mrs. Vavasour; and when one afternoon she made a final appeal to the Major not to withhold his consent any longer, and he answered with a look full of meaning: "If I found it hard to do that at first, it is impossible now," the lady made up her mind.

She wrote to Reginald by that night's post, and told him that she feared they had made a mistake. Not that she was not willing to wait for him any number of years, but she saw no prospect of their ever being married. His uncle was quite obdurate, quite impervious to every argument she could think of; and as they had neither of them any money, it was surely better to recognise the stern facts of the case. "Besides, my dear boy," she went on, "you know I am older, ever so much older than you are, and I have thought sometimes that I did you a cruel kindness when I consented to be yours. In a few years I shall be quite, quite an old woman, and then you will be glad that I found the strength to give you up. Do not try to see me, for my decision is quite irrevocable. Though it should break my heart, I must never see you again."

Mrs. Vavasour told the Major, not without tears, what she had done, and he highly commended her action. He told her at the same time that if he knew anything of his nephew he would be at the hotel on the following afternoon, and he thought perhaps it would be better if he went home for a day. To this Mrs. Vavasour gladly agreed, for she had forseen that it might be awkward if the uncle and nephew were to meet at the hotel. The Major departed, after taking a tender farewell of the all-subduing Julia, and Reggie arrived. Mrs. Vavasour shut herself up in her room, and it was only after the passing of many notes, impassioned on the one side, despairing on the other, that she consented to see him. He implored, raved, stormed, and all but cursed her. It was all to no purpose. The soft little darling was as hard as adamant in her resolve to do nothing to spoil the life of one to whom she owed so many happy hours. He went away at last, half mad with kicking against the iron barriers that stood between him and his desire. Three days after his return to London he sailed for Japan.

The Major saw him off, and on returning to the habitable parts of London he took a hansom and drove to a certain square, in which dwelt Mrs. Oldroyd, Reginald's mother.

The Major was admitted at once, and found his sister-in-law still tearful, and inclined to think that perhaps they had carried their plot a little too far.

"Not a bit of it," said the Major stoutly. "He'll thank us on his knees for this, before he is as old as I am."

"I had almost forgotten," said the widow, with a little blush, and she unlocked her desk and took out a little parcel, which she handed to her brother-in-law.

"If it is quite convenient," said the Major.

"Oh, quite—quite."

The Major put the little packet in his pocket, and flushed slightly as he did so.

"But don't you think—the lady—" began the widow, nervously.

"Not a bit of it!" exclaimed the Major. "By Jove, Marion, she's a splendid creature, and though of course it would never do for Reggie, I would marry her myself to-morrow if she'd have me. And that reminds me—I'd better enlighten her."

He took a pen and a sheet of paper, and wrote as follows:—

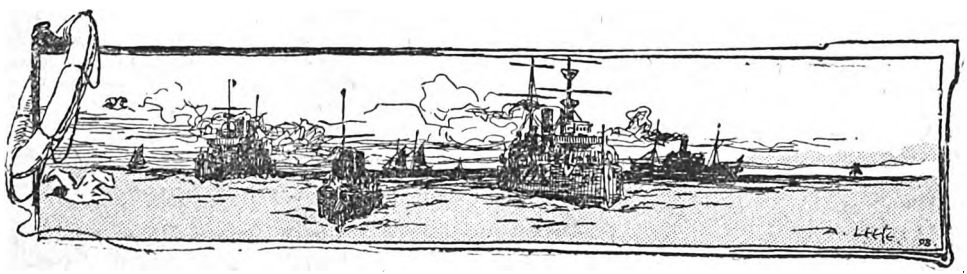
My dear Mrs. Vavasour,—

You mentioned one day that you would like to see Oldroyd Hall, the seat of our family. As my brother, Simon, who owns the place, is from home now, it will give my sister-in-law, Mrs. Oldroyd, and myself much pleasure to escort you down there and do the honours. My brother never receives strangers, or I am sure he would be delighted to meet you. He is quite a recluse, with very strict notions on a great many subjects, not a wandering ne'er-do-well like me.—Pray wire me to the Junior Army and Navy Club as to what day I may expect you in town, and believe me, dear Mrs. Vavasour,

Yours very truly,

Brian Oldroyd.

John K. Leys.



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Briton or Boer?

By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

INTRODUCTION.

For years past Britain and the Transvaal have been spoiling for a fight, and it was left to that well-known author, Mr. George Griffith, to write this strong and exciting serial nearly four years ago graphically describing a huge war between the two countries.

The story, coming so soon after the Jameson Raid, was read with unusual interest.

Now that Briton and Boer are in deadly conflict it will be interesting to read the story, and see how far the imagination of the author has actually come true.

SUMMARY OF OPENING CHAPTERS.

Chapter I.—The scene opens on the Rand. It is the eve of Amajuba day, and a State ball is being given. To this comes Prince Paul Regna, a Polish nobleman, and his daughter, Princess Vavara. They are introduced to Dr. Leyds.

Chapter II.—Dr. Leyds returns to Pretoria to attend a midnight consultation at the Government buildings. The Prince's rooms are in the Grand Hotel opposite. By tapping the wires, which cross the street at this point, the Prince and his daughter overhear all that goes on, and telegraph the result by secret code to Europe.

Chapters III. and IV.—Amajuba day dawns. The Secretary accompanies the Prince and Princess to Krugersdorp, where, from the base of the Monument of Independence, the President makes a great proclamation. The Convention of London is abrogated, the absolute independence of the South African Republic is declared; the President unfurls a Union Jack and rends it to pieces. So the storm bursts!

Chapters V. and VI.—On the following day Major-General Carrington learns at Buluwayo that all the wires have been cut between Rhodesia and the south and east. He concludes that this is due to Boer hostility, and prepares to meet it. Meanwhile a powerful British squadron appears unexpectedly in Delagoa Bay, and Lieutenant Ferris is sent ashore to take possession of the telegraph station.

Chapters VII. and VIII.—A Russian squadron is in the Bay at the same time. The flagship *Navarin* fires on the British destroyer *Thrasher*. Admiral Dale takes this as an act of war. There is a battle and the Russian squadron is defeated and captured. Michael Ostroff seeks to escape in the *Sokol*. He is taken prisoner, and important dispatches are found in his possession. Admiral Dale calls a council of war.

Chapters IX. and X.—General Carrington's campaign in the Matoppo Hills ends in the defeat of the rebels, the remnant of whom take refuge in a kopje, which is surrounded. A Rhodesian trooper and a private of Lancers capture a Boer disguised as a Kaffir, and take him into camp.

CHAPTER XI.

Between Two Wars.

Before daybreak the next morning the whole camp was afoot and astir. The General gave orders for four columns of a hundred men each to ascend the kopje from four different sides, and clear it out with as little bloodshed as might be. Meanwhile the rest of the force was drawn up in positions round the base of the hill ready to ride or shoot down any who tried to break through or get away. Then he sent for the Boer whom Private Anson had captured the night before.

He came in between two guards, washed and dressed in the semi-civil, semi-military attire that had been got together for him. His right shoulder was bandaged and his right arm bound to his body, his face was a sallow brown, not by any means bad looking, though marred by the expression of shifty slyness so often seen in the eyes of his countrymen, and by a surly turn about the corners of his mouth.

Yet he faced the man who could, and who probably would, string him up with little ceremony and less compunction to a convenient bough of the nearest tree without flinching; for, though a Boer will often run away from danger when he sees a chance of saving his life, he is usually brave enough when his back is to the wall.

"Do you speak English?" the General asked curtly looking keenly into his eyes.

"Ja!" said the Boer, "but I will only speak as much as pleases me."

"Just so," said Sir Frederick drily. "We don't tie our prisoners up to a waggon wheel and shambok them till they do speak. Now, what's your name?"

"Piet Potgieter."

"Where do you come from?"

"Rustenburg."

"Ah, a Dopper! One of the President's own particular flock, eh? Does His Honour know that you are up here playing the Kaffir?"

The Boer grinned and shook his head.

"Your way of telling a lie without speaking, I suppose?" said the General pleasantly. "I always thought there was something behind the old man's offer to send a commando to help us against the niggers. How many of you are there up here?"

"Maybe you'll find that out when you clear the kopje."

"Very well; you're not making it any the better for them or yourself when I do. How long have you been up here teaching the Kaffirs to shoot?"

"About six months."

"I thought so—about so long as you've been stopping supplies. How many stands of arms and rounds of ammunition have you given them?"

"About as many as we took from Jameson's crowd at Vlakfontein," replied the Boer with another grin.

The General acknowledged the retort with a smile, not a very pleasant one for a man whose life was in his hands to look at, and went on with his examination.

"How did you get the rifles and ammunition up here?"

The Boer grinned again as he replied:

"In the transport waggons, of course. They were directed to people in Victoria and Salisbury in case they were found, and then the waggons got stuck in the drifts, and the Matabele came down and plundered them; that's all."

The General glanced round at his staff and growled:

"Nice sort of supervision they must have had on the frontier. Why you couldn't get a pea-shooter into the Transvaal without it being found."

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Then he turned to the prisoner and went on, speaking more sharply: "Now, Mr. Potgieter, I don't know how highly you value your neck, but I suppose you know that by all the rules of war you've said and done enough to hang you two or three times over. However, I am prepared to treat you as an ordinary prisoner of war on one condition, and that is that you tell me frankly and plainly whether or not the Transvaal has actually declared war against the Imperial Government, about how many of your people have crossed the frontier, and how far north they had got when you last heard of them."

"I don't know."

"That's a lie."

"Then I won't tell. Find out for yourself, *verdomde rooinek!* There are enough of them, and they're near enough to eat you and your fancy soldiers up before you're very much older. Now I suppose you can hang me, for that's all you can get."

Sir Frederick looked for a moment into the dogged, unflinching face of his prisoner, then he said with a pleasanter smile than before:

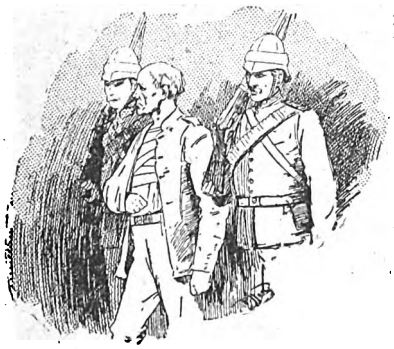
"You're an infernal liar, Mr. Potgieter, and a spy to boot, but you're a brave man, and, thanks to that little bit of temper of yours, I've got all out of you that I expected to get. At the same time, I'm afraid you're far too great a scoundrel to be allowed to return and corrupt the simple virtues of Mr. Kruger's peasant soldiers. I am sure your good President would agree with me that a white man who went back on his colour isn't fit to live—in fact, the dear old gentleman would shoot you himself for being found out, so you can't expect much mercy from me. Take him away and let him say his prayers if he wants to."

"You had better say yours soon, too, Butcher Carrington," the Boer shouted, his doggedness vanishing in a sudden flood of passion, "for you won't have much time to do it when the shooting begins. You can hang me, I'm only one, but there are thousands and thousands down yonder. All the Boers in South Africa are up by this time, and you English are going into the sea if you don't die sudden deaths before you get there. Soh Ja!"

The General waved his hand without speaking, and his guards marched the spy out of the tent. When he had gone Sir Frederick leaned back in his chair and said:

"Gentlemen, I'm afraid there's only too much truth in that. That fellow's the sort of liar who stumbles into the truth when he gets mad. The sooner we are on our way to Puri the better.

"Sir Richard," he went on, turning to the Deputy-Commissioner, "I shall suggest that you make the best of your way to Buluwayo with, say, four hundred men, for I've had to leave the place rather weakly defended. I shall get on down the road with the rest before night. We may as well know the worst at once. Anything is better than this uncertainty. Captain Turner, see that Captain Coope has his scouts out on the road within a couple of hours, and let him go cautiously, for there is no telling how far these fellows may have pushed their way up. Well, Ferguson, what is it?" he said to his aide-de-camp who had just come to the door of the tent.



The guard marched the spy out of the tent.

"Umzilizi, one of the Indunas, has come down from the kopje with two or three others and says he wants to *konza** to you, General. I fancy they've had enough of it."

"Oh, he does, does he," said Sir Frederick, looking not a little relieved. "Well, bring him in, but let the others stop outside. I know Umzilizi, and he's not at all a bad fellow, but too ambitious for a nigger. Never could understand that a white man is better than a black one. Fetch him in and let me see what I can make of him."

He stood with his arms folded across his chest.

The aide stepped aside and beckoned, and a tall, splendidly-built man, whose scanty beard was just beginning to grizzle, stepped into the tent, and with a graceful motion, that was a singular combination of dignity and deference, saluted the General, and then stood straight up in front of him with arms folded across his chest. He wore the polished head-ring of the warrior and the "man,"† and a leopard-skin kaross, the sign of chieftainship, hung gracefully from his shoulders.

"Well, Umzilizi?" said the General sternly, and yet not harshly, and speaking in the Matabele dialect of the Zulu tongue. "So you want to *konza*, do you. Are you tired of playing the fool and standing up in front of the little loud-speakers?"

Umzilizi bowed his head and said gravely:

"We are beaten, and we have been fools, for we listened to the voices of our worst enemies, the Amabuna‡ yonder. They told us they would help us to take our country back; now they are coming to take it from you and us too. Wau! we have been fools, but if the Great White Mother will take us back we will swear the faith, and we will fight for you against these liars if you will lead us."

"Is that true, Umzilizi?"

"I am Inkosi.§ I fought for the Great King and washed my spear when I was still a boy. I am an old man now, but I have not learnt to lie yet. May I be beaten to death by women, and may the dogs eat me if it is not the truth."

"That will do. I believe you," said the General. "Now, Umzilizi, I will make peace with you, and your people shall be forgiven all that is past on these conditions. First, you must bring all the arms that you have and lay them down here in camp. I may make a regiment of your young men afterwards, if they do wisely. Next, you must swear for yourself and your people, and all the other Inkosis and Indunas must swear, too, that not a man shall cross the Nuanetzi or go south from anywhere without leave from me. Lastly, you must give up to me Makone, if he is with you, and Chibi, and all the witch doctors, and smell out all the Amabuna who have come among you and brought you guns and set you on to fight, for these have done all the harm, and they must be punished."

"It is good, *Bubese Mninimandhla*; the conditions are light and generous, such as brave men may take from a great chief. It shall be done."

"Very well, Umzilizi. I trust to your honour as a chief and a warrior to see it done honestly, and the sooner it is done the better, for you have kept us too long here already; but mind, not one of the Amabuna must escape."

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* Speak civilly, treat with.

† One who has "washed his spear," and is allowed by the old Zulu laws to marry.

‡ Amabuna is the native term for Boers.

§ "I am a chief by rank."

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"The Ambuna are dogs and liars. I shall laugh when I see them die."

There was no mistaking the savage sincerity with which the old chief said this, and he was as good as his word, for as soon as the conference broke up he told his companions of the decision, and they at once ran towards the kopje from which the beaten rebels were now descending in crowds. They waved their arms, making signals to them and shouting, and instantly every man who was within earshot, and who had weapons in his hands, laid them down on the ground and stood stock still beside them, while the search parties that had been sent up came down in long lines, clearing out the rocks and bushes yard by yard so carefully that scarcely a meercat could have escaped.

He sprang into the air and dropped dead.

Then two Maxims were turned on the prisoners, and they were told that if any attempted to escape the little loud-speakers would begin to talk. Then Umzilizi and his fellow Indunas were told to range their men up in lines and "smell out" those who were wanted, and this they did with a readiness that showed how glad they were to get off the penalty of rebellion so cheaply.

Everything was done quite quietly and in order, save for one incident. One of the disguised Boers, knowing what was in store for him, took the chances of a bolt and ran for the open plain. He hadn't gone thirty yards before half-a-dozen rifles flashed at once, and he sprang into the air and dropped dead.

The rest had shrift almost as short. When Umzilizi had "smelt them out" they were tied up and had their faces washed with more expedition than ceremony. Then they were stood up against a wall of rock at the side of the kopje, with Mr. Potgieter in the midst of them, given fifteen minutes to prepare for death, and then shot, and as Trooper Jackson P. Bethell, of the Rhodesian Horse, justly remarked, "the average of the human race was raised a bit by their execution."

The chief, Makone, who had been responsible for the second rising in the North-east, and who had been proved guilty of several murders, Chibi, an ally in the first war who had turned traitor, the notorious and oft-slain M'Limo himself, and five of the so-called Indunas of the Gods, who had preached the rebellion in the first instance, with nearly a score of witch-doctors, were strung up without further ceremony on the first trees that came handy, and so ended the second and last Matabele war.

After a brief but serious conference with Sir Richard Martin and the staff officers, the General decided to form a regiment of a thousand picked men who had learnt to shoot decently well, commanded by Umzilizi and three other Indunas who had taken the oath of loyalty, but split up into four companies, and actually under the command of white officers who could speak their language, and further, to each company twenty-five troopers were attached in case of accident.

The four or five thousand who were left were soundly lectured, and then sent off to find their way back to their respective kraals, thoroughly cowed, but not by any means sorry to be so well out of a bad business.

Arms and a limited supply of ammunition were then served out to the others, who were almost beside themselves with pride at being allowed to fight under the Mighty Lion, and burning with eagerness to get at the Boers, whom they firmly believed had broken faith with them, as in fact they had, and were coming to take their country.

After this the camp was struck with all expedition. Sir Richard Martin struck out westward, *vid* Laing's Mine and the Insezi to Buluwayo, and the main force moved eastward over the hills to the eastward and down to the Pioneer Road.

For two days and nights they marched steadily on to the south, halting only now and then for a few hours, to rest man and beast, and then pushing on again, for every hour might be priceless. A few minutes after sunrise on the morning of the third day Captain Jessel-Coope, chief of the scouts, who was riding on with some of his men two or three miles ahead of the column, which was now about eight miles from the boat ferry over the Umzingwani, saw a cloud of dust down the road. His glasses went up and his men's rifles were at the ready in an instant.

A few moments later he saw a mounted figure in the midst of the dust-clouds. He threw up his hand and said: "It's all right, boys; you don't want to shoot. It's a woman. Great Scotland Yard, how she's coming! This means something bad, I'm afraid."

They put spurs to their horses and galloped on to meet the new-comer. Within ten yards of them she pulled up her labouring, panting horse, and as the scouts followed suit they saw, not a little to their surprise, that the "woman" was a slim built girl of about sixteen, with a face that would have been almost beautiful but for its ghastly pallor, with long, bright brown hair streaming over her shoulders from under the old felt hat that she had dragged down over her brows, and two big brown eyes that were staring blankly out from under the flapping brim.

"Do you belong to General Carrington's men? The Kaffirs told us you were coming," she gasped in a thick, husky voice that must have been very unlike her own, holding hard to the pommel of her saddle, and yet swaying unsteadily in it.

"Yes, we do," replied Captain Coope. "The main column is about three miles behind. What's the matter, miss? I'm afraid you're bringing bad news."

"Yes," she said in a voice that was almost a gasp. "It couldn't be worse. The Boers are all round Puri. More than a thousand of them have gone on to Buluwayo with some cannons. There are hundreds more waiting for you among the kopjes between the Sigabi and Selindila, and I believe they've got a machine gun with them. They've burnt out our homestead and killed father and mother and both my brothers, and I've ridden all night across country to tell——"

The last word ended in a long sigh, the girl's eyelids dropped, and she swayed backwards in her saddle and fell senseless into the arms of one of the scouts who had ranged his horse up alongside hers just in time to save her from falling to the ground.

CHAPTER XII.

Bad News from Home.

Never since the days of Rodney and Nelson had a British Admiral had such grave news to communicate to his subordinates as that which the captains and senior commanders of the British squadron in Delagoa Bay met in Admiral Dale's room on board the *Majestic* to hear.

As they were ushered in they saw him seated at his table with the contents of Mr. Michael Ostroff's dispatch-case spread out before him in little piles, showing that he had already arranged them systematically for reference.

They all waited anxiously for him to begin, for they knew that what was coming must be something very serious indeed. He began very quietly, but with the manner of a

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"We are beaten, and we have been fools- but if the Great White Mother will take us back we will fight for you."

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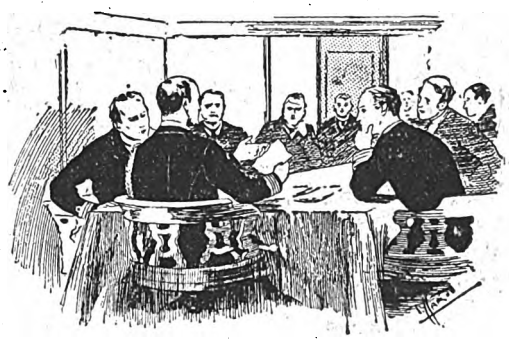
man who knows that he was speaking words which might find their echoes in the future history of the world.

"Gentleman," he said, "as you may imagine, I have called you together to discuss a matter of the gravest importance, not only to ourselves and the squadron under my command, but also to the British dominions in South Africa, and possibly to the Empire itself.



The Admiral went on speaking more seriously.

"You know already that we were dispatched in somewhat of a hurry under sealed orders for the south, and, as you learnt at sea last night, those orders were to the effect that we were first to take possession of Delagoa Bay and, if necessary, enforce the treaty of purchase concluded between the British and Portuguese Governments, and then to hold ourselves in readiness to co-operate with the land forces in South Africa in the event of trouble in the Transvaal, which there is not much need for me to tell you has been anticipated for some time at headquarters.

"This morning, thanks to intelligence telegraphed down the coast, we were able to concentrate here in time to anticipate the seizure of the port by a German squadron, which I expect hourly, and to capture a Russian squadron for whose presence here I was, until an hour ago, unable to account.

"Most fortunately, however, when the *Thrasher* captured the *Sokol*, Lieutenant Stevens took prisoner a civilian in whose possession these papers were found, and they go far towards explaining the presence of the Russians here, and also towards laying bare an almost world-wide international conspiracy—for I can really call it nothing else—the purpose of which is obviously the severance of the whole of Africa from the British flag, preparatory, I suppose, to a general scramble for the plunder. But what is of the most immediate importance is the startling revelation that they make about the state of affairs actually existing in South Africa.

"Gentlemen," the Admiral went on, speaking even more seriously and impressively than before, "it is my painful duty to tell you that yesterday President Kruger tore up the Union Jack at the annual independence gathering at Krugersdorp, and proclaimed, not only the abrogation of the London Convention, but also a war of conquest or extermination against Her Majesty's dominions and subjects in South Africa. By now there are probably 50,000 men in the field, and I need not tell you what land forces we have to oppose them. Even granted that the Matabele question were disposed of, I doubt if we could at once put 6,000 men properly armed into the field against them.

"I have here a series of telegrams in duplicate; they are all in cypher, but happily the key to the cypher was in a secret pocket in the dispatch case which I discovered through the accident of having to cut it open. Translation of the telegrams showed them to be in French. They contain the most exact information as to the plans of the Transvaal Government—which, I need hardly say, is at the head of the conspiracy—the number of men, forts, guns, and amount of warlike stores, points to be attacked, and estimated strength—or rather weakness—of the loyal forces.

"These appear to have been obtained in some quite unaccountable way by a Russian agent in Pretoria without the knowledge of the Transvaal Government. They are evidently intended for the guidance of Russia in the case of her very probable intervention in the quarrel.

"Now you will agree with me, gentlemen, that this is bad enough in all conscience, but I am sorry to say that there is even worse behind it, for in addition to these telegrams I have found dispatches and memoranda which leave no doubt in my mind as to the existence of a long-standing and most skilfully-managed intrigue, emanating in the first instance from Doctor Leyds, the State Secretary of the Transvaal, the object of which is nothing less than the prevention by all means, fair or foul, of the interference of the Imperial Government in the protection of Her Majesty's South African dominions from internal revolution or foreign attack—in other words, to leave South Africa and its loyal population at the mercy of an overwhelming force of revolutionists."

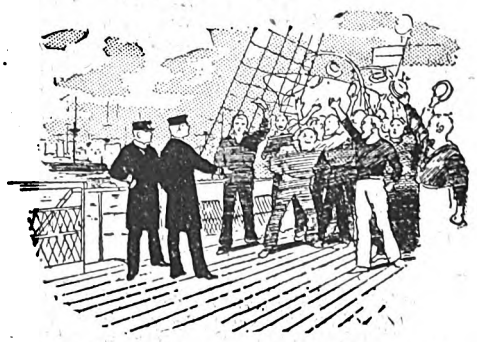
So far the assembled captains and commanders of the squadron had listened to the weighty words of the Admiral in silence. There had been not a few visible signs of discontent and not a little fingering of sword-hilts, but, of course, no one had spoken. When, however, the Admiral at length paused, as he did after the utterance of his last sentence, and looked round as though expecting some comment, the Captain of the *Magnificent*, who was the senior officer present, rose to his feet, and said in a tone of unmistakable indignation:

"But surely, sir, you do not intend us to gather from that that the squadron will return to England and leave our fellow-subjects in Africa to their fate?"

"No, it is hardly as bad as that, my dear Barlow," said the Admiral, smiling for the first time, "though I am glad to say at once that what you have just said indicates a spirit entirely in accord with my own, and, I believe, with that of every officer and man in the squadron."

An unmistakable murmur of acquiescence, which had somehow an angry sort of ring in it, told the Admiral that every man in the room was with him. He nodded in approval, and as the Captain of the *Magnificent* sat down, he went on, addressing him more particularly:

"I was going to say that this discovery, unpleasant as it is, has done something towards explaining a clause in the sealed orders, which I confess I was completely at a loss to understand. By it I am directed, in case of what are rather ambiguously termed 'unforeseen eventualities' to take measures in concert with Major-General Goodenough and Rear-Admiral Rawson at the Cape for assuming supreme



Every sailor on board volunteered for service.

naval command in South African waters, and co-operating with them in defence of the coast, and in the event of any unexpected developments to act absolutely at my own discretion and without reference to orders from home, which

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might not reach me in time to enable me to act with the promptness that necessity might demand.

"Well, now, gentlemen, whatever those words may have been intended to mean, what I propose to make them mean is just what they say. I take it that the necessity has arisen, and between ourselves I believe we were sent out here in the belief that it would arise.

"It will, of course, be our first business to see that, whatever success the revolutionists may have on land, neither supplies nor reinforcements shall reach them by sea, nor shall they have any communication whatever with the rest of the world, as I shall take possession of all cable-stations, and, if necessary, cut the cables. I shall press all the mail steamers into our service, and I am sure both the Union and the Castle lines will give us every assistance in their power. So far as I can prevent it, no news whatever shall reach Europe from South Africa until this business is settled."

Here the Admiral paused for a moment, and with a smile on his clean-shaven lips and a meaning twinkle in his keen eyes, dropped his voice and went on:

"And, gentlemen—strictly between ourselves, mind—I propose to take very good care that the cables shall not be capable of conveying any—well, I may perhaps say unacceptable—messages from home. I needn't remind you how convenient Nelson found his blind eye at Copenhagen. We could not have a more illustrious example to follow. We are on the spot, and should know best what to do. At any rate, we *will* know what is best.

"In short, if matters at home have really come to such a deplorable pass that the Government finds itself unable, through political complications or diplomatic intrigues, to protect its African dominions and subjects, we, and those who remain loyal to the flag, will do it by ourselves or perish in the attempt."

While this was happening in the Admiral's room the flag-captain of the *Majestic* was carrying out his orders with equal promptness and resolution. The Russian prisoners of war were taken out of their ships, disarmed, and landed under strong guards. Prize crews were placed on the captured vessels, which were at once thoroughly overhauled. The *Navarin*, being found hopeless, was run into the shallows to the south of the Bay, grounded, and blown up, after all her available guns and warlike stores had been taken out of her.

The three other ships—that is to say the battleship *Gangout* and the two cruisers *Rurick* and *Rossia*—were found to be available for almost immediate service. Thanks to their protective armour and the brevity of the engagement their hulls were practically uninjured and their engines perfect. The only damage they had suffered was in their top-works and lighter batteries, and even these had suffered nothing more than a fortnight or so at Cape Town and Simon's Town would suffice to repair.

It happened, fortunately, that just then Delagoa Bay was exceptionally full of shipping, mostly steamers flying the British flag. Among these were the Union Intermediate steamer, *Greek*, the Currie liner, *Pembroke Castle*, with four hundred and fifty men of the 2nd Leicestershire Regiment, under the command of Captain W. Pearson, bound for Beira, but stopped here by telegraph, and the two big six thousand-ton Bucknall liners, *Johannesburg* and *Fort Salisbury*.

The moment that the news of the war spread among them every English, Irish, and Scotch officer, sailor, engineer, and stoker on board of them volunteered for service to a man, and when it began to leak out that there was going to be a spice of privateering in the business, they were for going over the side at once and getting to work on board the captured Russian ships.

It happened also that there were four large German steamers—the German East-African mail boat, *Kanzler*, and three big cargo boats loaded with guns, ammunitions, and other stores for the Transvaal—and it was not very long before their captains received polite intimations to stop unloading *instanter* under penalty of being sunk where they lay.

He handed the paper to the Admiral.

Meanwhile, too, a strong force of marines had landed and took over possession of the quays, telegraph offices, signal-stations, and railway terminus, under strict orders to permit no communications of any sort to take place between the town and the interior, and the natives, enemies of the Dutch to a man, as all South African natives are, were told that the Great White Queen had declared war upon the Boers, and was coming to take the country back.

This stroke of diplomacy not only placed a small army of excellent spies at the disposal of the British Admiral, but further, when combined with the promise of prompt and liberal pay, gave him a very large supply of just the kind of labour that was wanted to put his plans into speedy execution.

It was getting on for two o'clock in the afternoon when the Council of War on board the *Majestic* was interrupted by the ringing of the Admiral's telephone. He went to it, listened for a moment, and said:

"Yes, by all means, send it here."

A minute or two later there was a knock at the door. When it was opened Lieutenant Ferris came in with a folded paper in his hand. He went up to the table, saluted, and handed the paper to the Admiral, saying:

"I thought I had better bring this myself, sir."

As the Admiral took it he looked up at the Lieutenant and said with a smile:

"I'm very sorry that we had to deprive you of that little run in the *Thrasher*, Ferris, but, never mind, there'll be plenty of fun for you yet. Now what's this?"

He had opened the paper meanwhile, and as he looked at its contents the smile died instantly from his lips. Lieutenant Ferris saluted again and disappeared, and as the door closed behind him the Admiral looked up and said very seriously:

"Gentlemen, the worst has come to the worst, and we have got to make the best out of it. Listen to this:

"'From Secretary of State for War to Admiral Commanding British Squadron, Delagoa. (Begins.) Your sealed orders confirmed in all particulars. Interpret last clause literally. Diplomatic complications in Europe preclude sending of further forces at present. Those in Africa at disposal of yourself and Goodenough, with whom you will act, absolutely at your own discretion and with full power to do what necessity may demand. No further orders. (Ends.)'

"No, and I'll take very good care that no further orders do reach me or anybody else," said the Admiral as he put the paper down on the table and struck it a sharp rap with his knuckles.

(To be continued.)

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of Grant Allen's "The Incidental Bishop" to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. W. Lavers, 31, Asylum Road, Peckham, S.E. Attempts for this week's prize may deal with ANY SUBJECT and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, March 26th. Post-cards only, please.

His Regiment.

AT an entertainment in the north of Ireland, on the evening of the relief of Ladysmith, the audience stopped the performance to sing the National Anthem.

So far this was all right, but more followed when a few excited young fellows caught sight of a man in uniform, and the wearer, despite his protests, was carried shoulder high in triumph round the hall.

When he regained *terra firma*, someone asked him for the name of his regiment, his uniform not being familiar.

"Regiment!" exclaimed the man. "Good heavens! Why, I'm the doorkeeper. What's the matter with you all?"

W. L.

Boat Ahoy!

A DRIVER of a water cart, returning from the well with water one night, was nearly startled out of his wits by hearing a voice hailing "Boat ahoy!"

He thought he was on board the transport again, until he again heard the hail, this time accompanied by the ominous sound of a rifle being brought to the ready, when he yelled out "Friend."

This brought the bluejacket who had challenged him to his senses, for he thought he was on his native element instead of the brown veld, and after mutual explanations had taken place the cart was allowed to proceed on its way.

C. S.

So Jones Paid.

THREE friends who had been spending the evening at their club agreed that the one who did not do as his wife told him when he got home, should pay for an oyster supper.

Smith, in trying to find the matches, trod on the cat.

"That's right," said his wife, waking up; "kill the poor cat and have done with it."

"Well," thought Smith, "I'll have to do it or pay," so he killed the family pet.

Brown in the dark stumbled against the piano.

"Why don't you break the piano?" demanded his wife.

Brown at once broke the piano.

When Jones got home he stumbled on the top step of the staircase.

"Go on," said his wife. "Tumble downstairs and break your neck."

"Not me," answered Jones. "I'll pay for the supper first."

H. H. R.

Better Off Than the Rest.

AN Irish soldier who had his leg amputated after the battle of Colenso, begged to be allowed to go again to the front when the wound was healed.

His arguments were as ingenious as his determination was great.

"You see, sir," he said to the doctor, "I should be better off than the others. If the Boers hit me where the leg's missing they wouldn't hit me at all."

C. M.

What It Will Come To.

"HARRY," exclaimed the blushing Laura, "this declaration is so sudden that I—that—I hardly know what to say. I was unprepared for it. It unnerves me."

"I was afraid it might," said the young chemist, rising with alacrity from his knees, "and I brought with me a bottle of my unrivalled nerve anodyne.

"This preparation, darling," he added soothingly as he took a bottle from his pocket, quickly extracted the cork, and poured a quantity of the medicine into the spoon he had also brought, "will allay any undue excitement, quiet the nerves and digestion, and restore lost appetite. I sell it at 2s. 9d. a bottle. This is the dose for an adult. Take it, dearest."

W. P.

No Returns of That Sort.

ONE evening an officer of a regiment with Buller saw a private soldier approach a comrade and say something to him. He was immediately knocked down by the latter.

"Here! what's the meaning of that, Sullivan?" demanded the officer of the aggressor.

"Sure, sorr," replied Sullivan, "Murphy was afther wishin' me manny returns of the day. It's me birthday to-day, sorr."

"Well, you ought to have thanked him for his kind congratulations, instead of striking him," said the astonished officer.

"Bedad, sorr!" cried Sullivan, excitedly, "yersilf doesn't know that in the foight to-day Oi got a nick out av me ear, a tooth an' me quid knocked down the throat av me, wan bullet through me wather bottle that was half full av real ould Oirish whisky, an' another through me only poipe. Afther such a day av disasthers, sure wasn't it the bad taste av Murphy to wish me manny returns av it?"

W. J. O.

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Not to Be Put Upon.

THE following is a laughable instance of the extreme sensitiveness of the ignorant rustic, who suspects himself of being "put upon" by his betters.

At a tenants' dinner, given by a certain Suffolk squire, covers were laid for forty, and, on the guests going to the table, one of t em stared for a moment at the napkin laid in the place assigned to him.

"What's this 'ere?" taking it up suspiciously between his horny fingers. "I ain't a-going to woipe up moy platt-r, I know."

And looking excitedly to his companions for their approval, he hurled the offending napkin behind him and flopped into his seat with a grunt of indignation.

E. T. R.

A Ballot for a Husband.

A GOOD-LOOKING, well-to-do bachelor in Georgia, U.S.A., was being teased by the young ladies of a club for not being married. He said: "I'll marry the one of you whom, on a secret vote, you elect to be my wife." There were nine members of the club.

Each girl went into a corner and used great caution in preparing her ballot and disguising her handwriting as well as she could.

The result of the vote was that there were nine votes cast, each girl receiving *one*. The man remains a bachelor, the club is broken up, and the girls are mortal enemies, united in the one determination that they will never speak to that man again. E. N.

Didn't Want Any Accident.

THERE was to be a review of a regiment of Lanarkshire militia, when the commander of the forces in Scotland was General Viscount Melville. The militia colonel had to read the word of command from a paper, which he did not even try to conceal. Lord Melville dashed about in a frenzy. At length the last manœuvre and final blow came.

"Form square! Make ready, present, fire!" was the word of command.

There was not a sound but the click of the locks.

"Colonel, what does this mean?" shouted the general.

"They have no powder," replied the colonel.

"No powder, colonel, for a field-day?"

"The fact is, general, sometimes the horses don't stand fire. Mine is very fidgety, and I thought it just as well the review should go off without an accident."

T. E. W.

A Fine Sermon.

A SUSSEX clergyman, having to be absent from the duties of his church on a certain Sabbath, secured the services of a very wise, grave, and reverend ecclesiastic for that day. The latter was a man of great reputation.

The only doubt his friend had was whether the visitor was not too learned for the country folk that he would have to preach to.

Returning in the following week the clergyman hastened to his parish clerk to inquire how the services of the preceding Sunday had passed off—in particular, how he had liked the sermon.

"Oh, sir," said the old clerk, in an ecstasy, "it was the finest sermon that I ever heard. I wouldn't presume to say that I understood a single word of it."

A. I. C.

Actors Don't Retire Early.

IT was nearing midnight, and the young man at the front door had said good-bye to the girl for the manyth time, and the old gent, who was the father of the girl, had been listening over the banister at the top of the stairs until his feet were cold and he was tired.

"Good-bye, darling," the youth again murmured.

"I say," called the old man, "are you a star actor, George?" for the old gent knew the youth.

George gasped in alarm.

"No—no—no, sir," he stammered.

"Excuse me," called out the old gent, "I thought you must be, you keep up your farewell to her so long," and the old gent chuckled and got away nearly as soon as George did. B. E. W.

The Retort Courteous.

ONE may be excused for feeling a little joy when the man who goes out of his way to make a rude remark in order to display his wit receives a rebuke that is as courteous as it is at the same time effective.

The retort given by a certain learned scientist must have been considerably more amusing to the onlookers than it was to the learned gentleman's antagonist.

It happened at a dinner that one of the guests began to deride philosophy and went on rudely to express the opinion that philosopher was but another way of spelling fool.

"What is your opinion, professor?" he asked. "Is there much distance between them?"

The professor, with a polite bow to his *vis-à-vis* responded gravely:

"Sometimes only the width of a table." A. R. B.

Speed Indeed!

A PRINTER and bookseller says that on one occasion an old woman from the country came into the printing-office with an old large-print Bible in her hand.

"I want," said she, "that you should print it all over again. It's getting a little sort of blurred, and my eyes is not what they was. How much do you ax?"

"Half a crown."

"Can you have it done in half an hour? Wish you would, want to be gettin' home; I live a good way out of town."

When the old lady went out, he sent round to the office of the Bible Society, and purchased a copy for half a crown.

"Sakes a massey!" exclaimed the old lady when she came back to look at it, "how good you've fixed it, and how quick you've done it. I never seed nothin' so curious as printers is." S. I. M.

Not a Good Advertisement.

FRIEND: "I say, Daub, I suppose you heard about our house being broke into the other night?"

Artist: "No, I hadn't heard. Did they take much?"

Friend: "A couple of watches, some silver, a suit of clothes, and it's a funny thing, but you know that picture you painted me—they cut it out of the frame, and——"

Artist (interrupting excitedly): "By Jupiter, old man, you don't say so! Why, my fortune's made! Yes!"

Friend: "And nipped off with the frame, the beggars!"

Artist: "Ah, did they? It's rather funny, isn't it? Good-day!"

Friend: "Good-day!" M. J. W.

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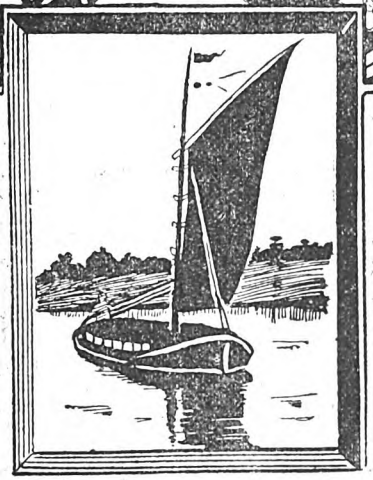

THE SHADOW ON THE PATH.

It is four o'clock. The drawing-room is trim and dainty. A quantity of pretty bibelots are scattered here and there. There are flowers everywhere. A tea-table with snowy cloth and delicate porcelain awaits visitors.

It is growing dark.

Madame Langlée is reclining at ease near the fire in the depths of a Louis XV. armchair. She is reading for the hundredth time a telegram received in the morning.

"I shall call to-day," it runs. "It is your day at home, I believe. Shall I see you alone? Alas, I fear not, though I desire it urgently.

(Signed), "ROBERT SIRIEUX."

Bertha glances at a jewelled clock on the mantlepiece, a gem of delicate workmanship. It is already half-past four.

She rises and wanders restlessly about the room, rearranging a fold of drapery, changing a cushion, tilting a flower. She is a woman of perhaps thirty, tall, slender, refined. In her trailing robe of violet velvet with a touch of creamy point, she is elegantly yet simply gowned. The sombre, rich hue of the velvet, relieved by the yellowish tone of the lace, throws out the dazzling tints of her fresh skin, the clear blue of her eyes, the tawny gold of her hair.

Madame Langlée is evidently possessed by unrest to-day. The dainty clock strikes the hour. She trembles. It is five o'clock. And, resisting no longer an inclination that overwhelms her, she runs to the window and presses her forehead against the cool glass. Her quick breath frosts the pane. The trees seem to take note of it and stare at her in astonishment. She drops the light curtain and retreats to her corner by the fire.

The darkness deepens and a servant enters quietly to light the lamps. It is a quarter past five. He hasn't come yet. Her fingers crumple the telegram, her thoughts are far away. This feverish uncertainty half-frightens, half-charms her.

"Will he come?" she says to herself. "He loves me, of that I'm certain. I cannot doubt it. He is coming to tell me that he loves me. The avowal that he began last night at the ball, among the flowers, with the sound of that waltz in our ears, he is going to repeat to-day in this calmer atmosphere, in the intimacy of my own home. He is coming, of that I am sure; and yet can I be sure—can I be sure of such a man—a man so fêted, so distinguished, so much sought after as he is—a man that a trifle might turn from me?"

Hark! a carriage stops, a door slams, there is the tingle of a bell! It is he! Ah, no, not he! There is a swish of silken skirts and a young fashionable woman enters.

"Oh, it is you, my dear girl!"

"Yes, it's I. I had just one moment and I stopped to say 'How do you do?' to you. Why, my dearie, how pale you are to-day?"

"No, no, I am not pale," said Mme. Langlée hastily. "Won't you let me give you a cup of tea?"

"Thank you. Do you know, my dear, how beautiful you were last night at the ball? It appears that Robert Sirieux found you bewitching. The effect of those roses in your hair was perfect. I saw him just a moment ago at the Baroness's. He spoke of you in a tone—well, my dear, I'll say no more. He wishes to paint your portrait for the salon. I heard him ask the Baroness to get your permission, and I've made haste to tell you about it, because, entre nous, the Baroness is madly in love with the handsome Robert herself, and you can guess how she received the commission."

"Did she say she would ask me?"

"Oh, yes, of course, she said she would be delighted and all that sort of thing, but immediately went on to say what a devoted wife you were, what an incomparable mother, and then she added that your husband, while a very fine man, is old, a greybeard, in fact, old fogyish beyond a doubt, and, that he would probably think Sirieux's request a little—well, a little impertinent? And now, my dear, I must go, I have so much to do, a dress to try on, a hundred little errands besides, but I wanted particularly to tell you about that conversation. Beware of the Baroness!" and with a soft rustle of lace and silk the pretty, girlish Countess departs.

* * * * *

The logs have burnt slowly, sending a warm glow throughout the room. The little clock strikes the half-hour, but Bertha does not hear it. She leans her head against her slender hand, pensively. She is thinking deeply, her eyes are dreamy. The chatter of the little Countess, who is gay and thoughtless and full of spirits as a bird, has suddenly cooled the fever of impatience that was burning in her veins. A healing calm steals into her mind.

The words of the Countess ring yet in her ears. So she has been talked about—already—in doubtful terms. She understands perfectly that her husband's name has been spoken with a shade of irony, and yet, after all,

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what has she done? She is beautiful, still young. She accepted for a moment, at a ball, where everyone could see, the arm of a man whom everybody was eyeing, an artist whose fame is made, a man whom it is the fashion to lionize. She scarcely knew him. She had accepted after a short conversation a rose, a favour of a cotillion that she had not danced. What did it all amount to? Nothing in reality, yet already people are gossiping about her, her husband, her children. Passionate resentment fills her heart. She rises, walks uncertainly across the room. Her fingers twist the bit of yellow paper. Just at this moment a carriage stops again. She trembles violently and with swift decision she turns, rings and says to the servant:

"I am not at home to anyone else. Say that I am indisposed."

The bell resounds. There is a moment's pause. Then the heavy door swings shut, and the sound of the carriage wheels dies away.

With a sudden throb of relief she slips to her knees in front of the fire and throws the fragments of the yellow paper into the flame. A joyous flaring blaze lights the room for a moment, then the charred scrap of paper floats lightly up the chimney. She smiles in spite of herself, pathetically, and resumes her languid position in the armchair.

It is a precious chair to her, a present from her husband after the birth of their son. She recalls with what tenderness he gave it to her, what care he had taken to see that it was soft and comfortable and deep, so that she might be at ease, happy to take up life again after her months of illness. It was in this armchair that she held her little son for the first time in her arms. Then with quickening recollection the picture rises again in her mind. The little fellow in the long clothes. They put him in her arms, then the nurses go away, and her husband comes and kneels at her feet. He takes the tiny hand of the baby in his, then her own slender white one, then he kisses them both softly.

In the midst of her reverie the door opens and M. Langlée enters. He is a fine vigorous man, with white beard and clear eyes, carrying bravely his sixty years. He comes to his wife's side. She raises her eyes. He sits down beside her and laughs a ringing youthful laugh.

"Why do you laugh?" she asks.

"Just let me tell you why, dear; as I was coming along the street who should I meet but that dunce of a little Feux, and he said to me with his insufferable air of importance—because he's twenty-five, you understand, and a member of the club, he thinks he need stop at nothing—'My dear Langlée,' he lisped, 'the news delights me; a portrait of Mme. Langlée by Robert Sirieux? It will be a beauty, the sensation of the salon, no doubt.'"

Mme. Langlée trembles and pales and steadying her voice with difficulty, asks: "And what did you reply?"

"Faugh! The little dandy looked so utterly inane with his hair parted down to the back of his collar and that ridiculous overcoat dangling to his heels, that I only burst out laughing; then recollecting myself, I made him a profound bow and said:

"'My dear Baron, accept my compliments. Madame Langlée will be delighted, no doubt, with this news that you are so good as to send her through me'—another profound bow—'my dear Baron.'

"The poor little Baron looked bewildered. And I, well, I laughed again, heartily, in a way those fellows no longer know how to laugh. It's said that laughter is French. That's true, but as to Frenchman, it is men of my class who are French, not those fellows. Our sons will be French if we bring them up in the good French fashion. As to that generation of manikins, with their London clothes and London manners, oh, they are too ridiculous!"

And again his fine ringing laughter fills the room.

* * * * *

It is seven o'clock. They are at dinner. There is a sparkle of crystal and a perfume of flowers. Mme. Langlée is lost in reverie. She is not eating. Her eyes wander from the silvery hair of the father to the blonde heads of the children. They are so happy and are chattering over the events of the day. The father answers their questions, playfully teasing them. She is saying to herself, "For just a moment's gratification because of a longing to taste a feverish emotion that is unknown to me, an excitement that I have read of, I was willing to go to him. Oh, the hideous disgust that would have followed—the lie, the sorrow—to have lived a shameful lie—to have felt myself unworthy of my husband, my children. How could I have weighed in the balance such treasures and such dross?"

She lives over the past. It comes back to her vividly. She recalls the days when she was a young girl just blooming into womanhood, when he, who is now her husband, came often to her father's house. He regarded her as a child, had the feeling for her that a father might have, and her pretty assumption of dignity amused him. She had listened to his words. His voice lingered in her ears. His fine, hearty, joyous laughter enlivened the whole household. He talked well, too: he said things to her which made her dream hours away when he was gone. And of all the number of young men who fluttered in the light of her smiles, she wished none. It was he whom she wished, he, he alone.

People said she was too young—a mere child, scarcely twenty years old—and he almost fifty, all the best part of his life gone. But such a life, however! What a noble life, full of wholesome pride, energy, independence, with a spice of audacity, perhaps, but that did not offend the girl. Was not the life of a man such as he a thousand times preferable for her? The thought that such a man should love her filled her heart with pride. The tenderness of his eyes, the tone of his voice when he spoke to her were so sweet. Such a husband would make her life so happy. He would be indulgent, would sympathise with her whims, would grant her everything.

"Every whim of yours will be granted," he had said to her on the day of her engagement. "Everything that is good for you, my little girl, you shall have. Everything that will be good for you to have it shall be my joy to give you. We'll gather all the flowers along the path, every one, every one, sweetheart; but those things which are like the nettles of the fields, the thorns, those we will leave. They would do you harm."

His voice had been so tender, so caressing when he said this. She could hear it yet, Then she had taken his hand, she had kissed it.

"You shall decide these things always for me," she had replied.

She knew why she had spoken so to this lover. It was because he had lived a clean life of which she was proud and had before him a future still large, an autumn full of promise.

Ten years of her life with him have passed—happy upright, full of mutual confidence and love. She has two lovely children and a husband who is as devoted as on the first day. She has lived happily, and now, after

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ten years, a shadow has fallen on her path, the first! A ball-room, a young and brilliant man, a lion of the hour as yet unknown to her. This man crossed her path, thought her beautiful.

"Who is this woman?" he asked.

"Madame Langlée," someone had answered.

"Ah, the wife of Langlée?"

He came up to her, offered her his arm. She felt herself thrill strangely. This man was sort after by woman. But he did not speak to her in terms that he chose for other women. She realised that. She felt the subtile fascination of his manner. He had brought her an ice and his fingers had brushed hers as he handed it to her. As she was going he had given her a rose, a flower perhaps meant to be cherished by her in memory of him. Then the telegram this morning.

"And why has he dared all this?" she whispers to herself. "Because for one instant I could not turn my eyes from his. In that instant he read consent in them. So for a moment I forgot my duty, betrayed a sacred confidence. In a moment's madness I would have sacrificed—lost, all the happiness that is mine, the life that I chose willingly—in an instant of forgetfulness I would have ruined it."

A wave of shame swept over her.

"What is the matter, dear one?" asked her husband. "You are so silent this evening. Are you not well?"

"No," she said aloud, "my head aches a little."

"Already I am driven to a lie!" she whispered to herself.

* * * * *

An hour later, after the children have been sent to bed, M. Langlée comes to his wife.

"Bertha, dear, there is something wrong. I can see it. Tell me what it is. It troubles me."

Then, overcome by the tenderness that he shows for her unfailingly, she kneels before him, puts her burning face in her hands, and shaking with emotion, she sobs convulsively. He, surprised, waits silently till she is calmer, softly stroking her bowed head.

"Bertha, dearie, tell me what it is."

She raises her head and turns to him her eyes filled with tears.

"Forgive me, love." She says, slowly, simply, "I found one of the poisonous flowers that you told me about, among some thorns on my path. The thorns have wounded me but the flower—oh, my husband I did not gather it and I am so glad. You see," stretching out her hands wet with tears, "the thorns hurt me, the blood flows yet. But the flower, husband, is gone; it is far away, it has withered."

And he, understanding suddenly, is filled with a great pity for her, feels a deeper affection for her than ever; he stoops and kisses her forehead.

"Bertha, little woman, don't cry. We cannot control our thoughts. They run far from us in paths where we do not wish them to go. It is our will that brings them back. The perfume of a flower intoxicated you but you resisted; you are enobled, not degraded in my eyes. What would be the merit of constancy if uncertainty, temptation, choice did not exist? I love you, wife, more than ever. My love cannot change."

And Mme. Langlée, doubly grateful for her refound happiness, lifts her head and encircles her husband with her loving arms; then, in a burst of thankfulness and love, she whispers in his ear the passionate avowals of their first happy days together, truer, deeper, more living to-day.

E J. Lovyen.

THE PRINCESS OF WALES'S

OPINION OF

PEARSON'S WAR PICTURES.

Mr. G. Vicary, of 110 Newington Butts, S.E., writes:

"You will doubtless be interested to learn that during the visit yesterday (March 7th) to Rowton House of H.R.H. the Princess of Wales, H.R.H. did me the honour to inspect the bookstall I conduct there, and from amongst the numerous periodicals displayed, many of which H.R.H. examined, she was graciously pleased to purchase a copy of the current number of Pearson's WAR PICTURES, remarking that it was very good indeed."

Pearson's

WAR ATLAS AND GAZETTEER.

is ready to-day.

20 MAPS FOR 2d.

Keep this by you. No more anxiety as to where a place is.

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Everything as plain as A B C.

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£250

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TO THE

READER OF "PEARSON'S WEEKLY"

FROM WHOM WE RECEIVE A COUPON IN WHICH IS WRITTEN

THE EXACT DAY

UPON WHICH THE

British Flag will be Officially Hoisted in Pretoria.

ALL YOU HAVE TO DO.

Fill in the accomp nying coupon.
Send it in to us as soon as you like.
Send as many coupons as you like.

If two competitors name the exact day the money will go to the one who gives the correct hour of that day. If two or more give the correct day and hour the £250 in full will go to him whose coupon we received bearing the earliest date of sending in. Pretoria time, which is about one hour and three quarters in advance of English time, must be stated.

The Editor's decision must be final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding.

The Editor reserves the right to close this competition at a day's notice.

Address all envelopes to "War Editor," Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

We shall take it that competitors mean the year 1900, unless they state otherwise.

This notice and coupon also appears every week in the ILLUSTRATED WAR NEWS, HOME NOTES, PEARSON'S WEEKLY, SUNDAY READER, and the BIG BUDGET.

Pretoria Coupon. S.S.] March 24, 1900. Date of Writing .....

Name.....

Address .....

.....

.....

Day..... Hour..... (Pretoria Time.)

BOVRIL

"Alas! my poor Brother"

One hundred per cent!

The highest diploma and the greatest premium that can be awarded to any food preparation have been given to Bovril in a practical public endorsement, which up to date this year has resulted in

DOUBLE THE SALES

made during the corresponding period of last year. This is without including the large Government supplies for the South African War. Bovril is the great

1. Preventive of Colds, Chills, Influenza, &c.
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4. Aid to the Cook in the Kitchen.

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WIPED OUT.

TOLD BY A CHAPLAIN.

I HAVE met with a sad story since I have been out here with the troops.

One afternoon after I had been talking to a company of infantry in the camp near Gras Pan, a young private asked to see me alone.

He began in a somewhat halting, and yet semi-excited way, to tell me he was in great distress.

In as kindly a manner as possible I asked him to make a confidant of me, promising to help him if I could.

"Well, sir," he said, speaking with great rapidity and earnestness, "I got into trouble at home. My father is a well-to-do man in Myvern and I was articled to an architect. Somehow I got mixed up with a gambling crew.

"As so often happens. I suppose, though I was fool enough not to see it, I went from little to more, risked money belonging to the firm with which I was articled; lost it; failed to replace it; and might have stood in the dock had not the firm sent for my father.

"I shall never forget the look he gave me. He has been a good father to me but lacking in sympathy. I am sure I should have taken flight had I known he was being sent for.

"He simply turned on me with a cold stare which froze the blood in my veins, and in a voice, harsh even for a naturally severe man, said:

"'I had rather you had died. You are no son of mine, I disown you. Go and wipe this out, if you can!'

"Slinking away like the whipped cur I was, I strove to drown my shame in drink.

"I have only a half recollection of what immediately followed, but dimly I afterwards realised that I determined to enlist; that I went as I was to Ethel Best, my *fiancée*; that I came away with her words burning into my brain on the top of those of my father's—'Yes, Jack, go and wipe it out. It will break my heart if I see you again before you have done it.'

"She looked, sir, like some priestess commanding a sacrifice. I simply dare not call her back as she rushed from me. I went out sobered, determined to wipe it out. I enlisted; and here I am.

"What I want you to do is this—I have sent several drawings home through Mr. Dent the artist. The money he promises is being sent here. It will pay my debt with interest. I want you to receive it and should anything happen to me send the money to Messrs. Jott and Tally, of Myvern, get the receipt, and send it to my father, and a copy to Ethel Best."

He was a splendidly-built, bright, handsome-faced young fellow, who looked capable of anything but meanness; and I immediately promised that I would do as he wished, and after I had added a few words of encouragement he withdrew.

The battle of Gras Pan took place next day. Our men fought magnificently and won a splendid victory against odds of positions and numbers.

After the fight I fell in with the Captain and found him full of enthusiasm over a splendid deed of heroism of one of his men.

He had not got very far with his story when I discovered his hero was no other than my young penitent.

I just write down what he said:

"You will have heard, Chaplin, of the warm corner we got in and how we carried the spur of the kopje from which Cronje's men were doing their most serious work. Well, as a matter of fact, it seemed certain we should be smashed back again, for they were fully three to one. I rallied my men, however, and led them forward at the double. No sooner had I done so than I got this beastly shot in the ankle, whilst Gower, my subaltern, was shot dead. As I lay there with bullets whistling and spitting all round me, I thought it was all over with us, for our lads were leaderless, when to my amazement I saw young private Wise leading them on and fighting like a lion.

"He seemed to bear a charmed life. Four Boer marksmen popped their ugly faces over the rocks and fired nearly point blank at him, but on he went, cheering madly.

"Leaping over the boulders he bayoneted one man, brained another with the barrel of his rifle, jabbed a third right through, and was floored by the fourth from the rear.

"I yelled to the others to help him, but before I could get the words properly out he was up and on that Boer like a tiger. He had lost his rifle, but he simply whirled the man off his feet and crashed him at a group of astounded Boers who dare not fire for fear of their comrade.

"They were floored by the impact; the thrown man was killed; and before I could make anything further out, the trenches were ours.

"By gad, sir, I have never seen anything like it. If he does not get his V.C. before we get to Pretoria, it will only be because he gets a Mauser bullet through him."

Off he hobbled, for his wound had not proved a serious one, and he declined to be altogether relieved of duty, but his radiant face suggested that he was willing to hobble or bear anything to lead such men.

I met my young friend next day. I had only time to grip his hand as he hurried past on duty; but as I whispered "You are wiping it out," a look of exultation passed over his face, which for the moment literally transfigured him.

The sequel came after the Battle of Modder River. Passing over the stricken field with the ambulance corps, I was startled to find young Wise apparently dead.

He was close to the river and the saturated clothing suggested he had been in it. His skull had been smashed by a shot in the rear.

As the light flashed in his face he opened his eyes,

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DELICIOUS! WHOLESOME! REFRESHING!

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THE LANCET: "An excellent Jelly, possessing a flavour of quite a natural character."

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FREE SAMPLE on receipt of post-card. S. CHIVERS and SONS, Histon, Cambridge.

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ALL FAT PEOPLE

can safely **Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

Send 2s. 6d. to **THE TRILENE CO.,** Sole Proprietors, **66 Finsbury Pavement, London.**

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 28lb., and I am cured." Mrs. Darnley-Smith, of Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, says: "Tablets have reduced me very much." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Comston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

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CURED. This can be done with or without patient's knowledge. Send me a stamp and I will tell you how. (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Mrs. C. H. (Room 8), 105 Oxford Street, London, W.

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Every man suffering from Varicocele and the allied troubles, should send for treatise, describing their Causes, Symptoms, Results, and Successful and Painless Treatment without surgical operation or the use of cumbersome trusses and electrical appliances. Will be sent sealed, post free, three stamps.

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If you have, Use "Antexema" It gives immediate relief as soon as applied and ultimately cures. Sold by chemists and stores, or post free for 1/3 and 2/9 from the Antexema Co., 83, Castle Road, London, N. W.

Write, naming this paper, for a FREE TRIAL SAMPLE.

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FOR ALL

BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS,
Sick Headache, Constipation, Wind and Pains in Stomach, Impaired Digestion, Disordered Liver, and Female Ailments.

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In Boxes, 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.

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WORCESTERSHIRE SAUCE
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suddenly sat up, and with eyes literally ablaze shouted:

"They have the ammunition now, we can hold out till morning! —ah—it—is—wiped out!"

And he fell back dead.

Two days afterwards I succeeded in discovering two of his company who were with him. Both were wounded; but the more intelligent of the two, told me what had happened.

"It was this way, sir, Jack Wise was amongst those of us who first reached the river.

"It was a hot place I can tell you, and Bill, yonder, who got hit early on, would have been drowned but for Jack, who leapt into the water and got him out, whilst the Boers, who do not seem to have an ounce of chivalry in them, concentrated their fire on him, although it was clear what he was doing.

"We lay for some time under cover, and I can tell you we gave it them all the more hotly because of Jack's narrow escape, for he was a favourite with us all.

"As our supports came up we were ordered to try to cross. Jack and I were the first to succeed. I should never have managed it but for him, for I got hit as you see, sir, and he half carried me to the bank.

"Here we kept gaining in strength and by dint of ceaseless fire made our position good.

"Then our ammunition gave way, and the Captain asked for volunteers to fetch more. Two were shot in the attempt, but Jack got across and came back through a perfect rain of Mauser bullets with ammunition for us all.

"It became necessary to send a message across again, and once more Jack volunteered.

"What exactly happened I could only half see, for I was almost helpless; but I saw him reel as he emerged from some bushes and gesticulated to the officer commanding our reserves.

"That was all, sir; but if ever a man proved himself a soldier, and a trump at that, it was Jack Wise. Aye he'd a been something if he'd lived!"

I turned away with heart too full to even speak. Jack Wise had indeed "wiped it out."

Next day I wrote to his father telling him all. I have since received a reply from the old man. It was penned by a hand evidently usually firm but now just as plainly halting and shaky. It simply thanked me, and closed with a sentence whose heartfulness was only too plain:

"May God forgive me for my cruel words—May I have grace to wipe it out half as really as he."

This week I received a newspaper giving the names of volunteer nurses who are coming out. The first on which I really set my eyes read "Ethel Best of Myvern."

T. T.

BOAT RACE COMPETITION.

ON Saturday, March 31st, the Oxford v Cambridge Boat Race will take place. There is every reason to believe that the contest will be an exciting one, and so that our readers might take additional interest in the national event we offer a Prize of £5 to the sender of the coupon, printed below, giving most nearly correct: (1) The Winning Boat; (2) the distance separating the two boats at the finish; (3) the time taken by the winning boat in the race. The third condition will only be used to decide the actual winner of the prize in the event of more than one giving equally correct answers to the other two questions.

The Judges' decision of the race will be our standard for making the award.

Having filled up the coupon to your thinking, sign your name and address in the space provided on the left and get two friends to sign their names and addresses on the right. In the event of your winning the prize they will each receive £1. Competitors may send in any number of attempts, all of which may be signed by the same witnesses.

In the event of two or more competitors qualifying for the first prize, the £5 will be equally divided. The witnesses will also share in the same way.

Up to the present time fifty-six races have been rowed. Oxford have won thirty-two and Cambridge twenty-three races, the 1877 contest being a dead heat. Cambridge won last year by 3¼ lengths, the time being 2 min. 4sec. Oxford won the races for the preceding nine years, their times being from a minimum of 18min. 47sec. to a maximum of 22min. 15sec., and their wins during that time from half-a-length to thirteen lengths.

All envelopes containing coupons should be addressed: "Boat Race Competition," *Short Stories*, 17 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and should reach us not later than the first post, Wednesday, March 28th.

"SHORT STORIES" BOAT RACE COMPETITION COUPON.

TIME OF WINNING BOAT:

Winning Boat: .....

Min. / Sec.

Distance Won by: .....

Competitor. .....

.....

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Witnesses. .....

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DON'T STOP

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WIN THIS PRIZE

So simple anyone can do it, and all have an equal opportunity.

PRICE 1/-. *POST FREE, 1/1½.*

From C. ARTHUR PEARSON Ltd., Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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The Brain Gymnasium.

In these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, Short Stories, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by Monday, April 2nd, 1900.

No. 70.

The name of a well-known poet, and one of his works, are hidden in the following words:

SWARM—TRIAL—IT—ROOM—SCENT.

No. 71.

Five well-known writer's names enigmatically expressed:

An encampment and a nautical term; vocal sounds and merit; arid and a cave; extended and a companion; a servant.

No. 72.

N I N I R O S I S I T O T I T I.

Form a sentence with the above letters so that no two vowels nor two consonants come together. The words employed are to be all of the same length.

No. 73.

T I S D N I
O B S Y I N D L
T O L L
H G A D T O W B
W I O N O A

Re-arrange the letters in the horizontal lines so that the whole, read downwards, will give a familiar proverb.

No. 74.

The initials of the names of the following will give a well-known river:

A coin.
A foe.
An ornament.
A big animal.
A small animal.
A labourer.

No. 75.

Re-arrange the vertical lines so that, read horizontally, a well-known saying, often misquoted, will appear.

T H H A E T M C O P
E S L A I G N A I S
I S T W H I I L L S
H I O S F O O W N P
I O I N N S L T I L

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Nos. 46 to 51.

These competitions are being taken up so well by our readers that no less than one hundred and four competitors gave correct solutions of all the puzzles appearing in the issue dated February 24th.

It would be unsatisfactory to attempt to share the prize of £2 amongst this large number, so we are setting an anagram to be competed for by these one hundred and four only, and are writing each one to that effect.

We would call competitor's attention to the alteration we have made in the apportioning of the awards, and feel sure that the new conditions will give more satisfaction to all.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES

Nos. 52 to 57.

No. 52. I — O — I.

No. 53. Daffodil; dahlia; add-half-foil-aid; lid-of-fad; ail-had.

No. 54. REEL—APT; PRELATE—RELATE—ELATE—LATE—ATE.

No. 55. PLEA—SURE.

No. 56. AGE—GAME—IMAGE.
ENIGMA—MEANING—MENACING.

No. 57. CHAMBERLAIN:
Coldstreams,
Horse,
Arms,
Militia,
Brigade,
Ensign,
Roll,
Lieutenant,
Artillery,
Infantry,
Natal.

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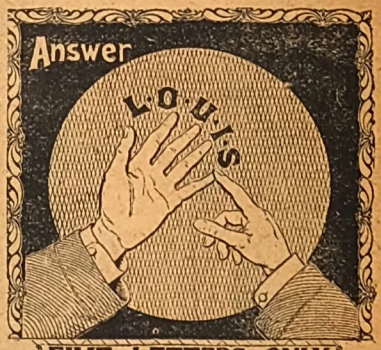

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A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN

No. 587. FOR WEEK ENDING MARCH 31ST, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

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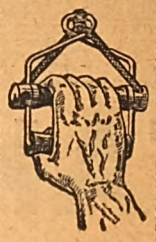

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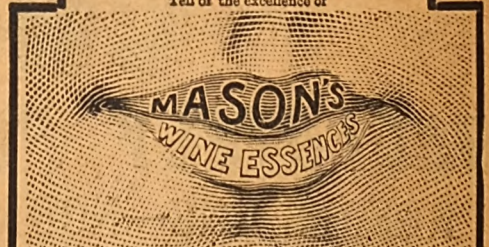

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SHORT STORIES

No. 587.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week Ending March 31st, 1900.

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THE MINE OF FABULOUS WEALTH.

ABOUT thirteen years ago I happened to be on a private prospecting trip, and stopped over for some days at Los Angeles. It was in the spring of the year, and my intention was to prospect the San Gabriel mountains to the north, and perhaps, continue my route up the country, if I did not find any favourable indications nearer.

I was stopping at the Picco House, and, the day after my arrival, fell in with a man with whom I had some business acquaintance in the city. Matt Haslom, as he was called, was something of a mining operator, something of a gambler, about forty years of age, shrewd in his speculations, with a keen eye to business, and always on the look-out to turn a penny; some said he wasn't very particular about its honesty, either.

Well, we naturally got to talking, and before very long I found out that he was in that section of the country to look after some mining claims in which he was interested, though he was very mysterious and reticent about it.

"Doc," he said one morning, after I had been there a day or two—he always called me "Doc"—"can you keep a secret?"

I told him I thought I could.

"You never knew I had been a prospector myself, did you?"

I told him I never thought he would go to the trouble that prospecting usually entails; that he would prefer to make money in an easier way.

"Well, I went upon one trip, all the same," he said. "It was about three

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years ago, and we struck such ore as you never saw in your life. Talk of free gold. Why, that rock would crush heaven knows how many thousand dollars to the ton. To my veritable belief it would run from twenty to thirty per cent. pure gold."

"Then it would crush over a hundred thousand dollars to the ton," I said, dryly. "Wouldn't want many tons of that to quit operating altogether, and take things easy ever after."

"Well, you may think I'm joking," he returned. "But look at this," and he pulled a small piece of rock from his pocket.

I examined it carefully, and found that it was, as he said, phenomenally rich in free gold.

"Well," said I, "that proves nothing. I've seen many a small chunk of rock equally rich. That is not to say that there is a ledge of the same richness. An occasional nugget, found here or there, does not presuppose the presence of a harvest of them. The same way with your piece of rock. The ledge it came from might not average twenty dollars to the ton."

"But," he said earnestly, "it is my belief that there are hundreds, yes thousands, of tons of just such rock, in the place I mean."

"Then why on earth don't you work it?" said I. "You are scarcely the man to let such an opportunity slip, I should think, if you really thought so."

"Thereby hangs the tale," he answered sententiously. "The fact is, I have lost the track of the precise spot."

"Then why on earth don't you prospect the country over again?" I asked. "You must have a general idea of the location, and it seems to me it would pay you to spend months, or even a year or two, in prospecting the neighbourhood, if there were really such prospects as you say ahead."

"Ah, there's the rub! So it would," he coincided, "if there were a fair chance to do so. But it is an awful country. Were you ever up Death Valley way?"

I told him I had never been any nearer than Panamint, where we are now, on the one side, and Pahranagat, on the other, but that I had heard enough about it.

"Well, then, you know," he went on, "what a treeless, waterless, pestilential, forsaken region it is. I defy any one to stay in that section of the country more than a few days at a time without running short of food and water for his animals. He would have to be constantly journeying where he could reach these necessaries. How can a person prospect under such conditions?"

"Then why didn't you look out for that in the first instance?" I said. "Why didn't you take bearings from some conspicuous object in the neighbourhood and put these bearings upon paper, in relation to the route you took when you left your ledge."

"I had that," returned Haslom. "I had just such a chart of the country, with directions I could understand, but—I lost it. I have been over that region three separate times since, but the cañons and ridges of the Amargosa are so much alike that it is like hunting a needle in a bundle of hay."

"Ah, you lost your map," I said. "That's bad! But you weren't alone, were you? You said *we*, once. You must have had a partner, then? Is his memory as faulty as yours?"

"Just as bad," he replied. "He's dead. Caved in on the desert before we reached the Mojave."

I consider myself something of a judge of human nature, and thought I noticed a hesitation in Haslom's tones as he said this.

"But the best thing I can do," he continued, "is to tell you the whole story. I have never told it to a living soul before, but I want to interest you in the matter—I want to interest you so much as to induce you to join in the enterprise. You're an old hand at the business; you're on your own hook at present; you've got the time to spare. Why not give me the benefit of your advice and experience, and take a full partnership in the richest known ledge in the world?"

Such language, such offers, and such sanguine expectations I was not unused to—they are the stock-in-trade of many an adventurer who has really nothing in sight—but I had myself heard, at Pahranagat and elsewhere, the dim traditions of fabulous treasure that float about the barren range of the Amargosa, and

I examined it carefully, and found that it was phenomenally rich in free gold.

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the untrodden *mesas* of Death Valley, and as the day was warm, and the verandah of the Picco House cool, I was not averse to hearing what Matt Haslom had to say, giving it you as near as I can in his own words. My memory is fortunately good, and the whole affair left a deep and ineffaceable impression on me.

"It was just about this time three years ago," he began, "that I happened to be here in Los Angeles, and living in this very house.

"I wasn't thinking of mining investments or anything of the kind—in fact, Doc, I was here purely on a pleasure excursion. You know I have a weakness for the fair sex, and one day, while strolling along Kearny Street, I met the handsomest girl, I think, I had ever seen in my life. Tall, dark, magnificently formed, with regular features, clear olive complexion, in fact, a perfect type of Castilian beauty. I was fascinated the first time I saw her—so much so, in fact, that I kept her in sight, and made it my purpose to find out who she was. I ascertained, by dint of inquiry, that she belonged to an old Southern Californian family called Ramirez, whose home was in Los Angeles, but whose family was now rather poorly off.

"I had, just then, made rather a lucky deal in stocks, and having money to spare, and keeping posted as to the lady's movements, timed my own so as to take passage on the *Orizaba* for San Pedro, on the same trip that took her south. I need not explain to you how introductions are effected on board ship. However, to cut a long story short, I received an invitation to call upon the family in Los Angeles.

"There were only three in the household: Dolores—that was the name of the girl—a brother named Pedro, and the old mother. The main thing they knew about me was that I was a mining man from San Francisco. From that I suppose they argued that I was a man of means; and, as a matter of fact, I had at the time quite a little pile of money.

"Before long I began to get pretty intimate with the family, and one day Pedro confided to me the secret that he had some old document, relating to a very rich ledge some two hundred miles to the north-east of Los Angeles, but that not being anything of a miner himself, and not being well able to understand what the paper said, he hadn't cared to bother with looking after it, and hadn't cared to let the secret out, so that someone else might get the benefit of it. Now, however, that he had come across a regular mining man—a man who had money for mills and machinery, and all that—it had occurred to him to look closer into the matter. Would I go in with him?

"I hadn't much faith in the thing, but I had heard as you must have, too, that some very rich ledges were known to the Indians, and thought that perhaps, after all, this Mexican might have something good. So I asked to see the document, and was surprised to find that it was written in English. I saw, too, that it was old—the ink was yellow—and that made a good impression on me.

"The directions were all plain enough till they struck the Mojave desert; then they ran on by a hill here, and a butte there, and a spring elsewhere, till they struck the Amargosa range. Then they grew more precise, beginning at a lone bluff, at the entrance of a cañon upon the south-east side of the hills. From there onwards was a map showing ridges, cañons, and divides, with a black line running zig-zag through them and across them, and distances put down in yards from angle to angle. I could see it was the work of someone who knew what he was about, and this gave me a still better impression of the thing than I had at first. I asked Pedro how he came by the document, and he told me it

I was fascinated the first time I saw her.

was given him by his father when he died some ten years before, and that he had got it from a white man, who had come to his house as far back as '51, in the last stages of consumption—there were very few Americans in Los Angeles then—and the family had nursed him and kept him till he died.

"Well," he continued, "I made up my mind that there was something in what the Mexican said, and that the thing was worth looking into; so it was agreed that he and I should start out and see whether we could not locate this mine, or ledge, or whatever it was; I to bear all the expenses of the trip and the outfit, and afterwards, if it was found to be as we thought, to put in money enough to work and develop it, the two of us to be partners, share and share alike.

"Within a week we started out, following the directions of the old miner, which we found so accurate that we had no difficulty in locating the spot, only suffering from want of water, and being forced to return before we could do anything of any consequence, intending, of course, to return right away with ample provisions to go right to work, and get out the ore."

"And the reason you couldn't do so," I said, "was, as I think you told me, that you lost your directions?"

"That's it exactly," replied Haslom.

"Were there any signs of recent work?" I next inquired.

"No. I should say nothing had been done on the

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shaft for many years," replied Haslom. "There was a windlass still across the mouth of the shaft, with a rope round it and a bucket, on which a man could go up or down, and which was, of course, used for raising the dirt, or, rather, the gravel, while the shaft was being sunk. It was sunk through pure gravel most of the way, till the ledge was struck. It must have been mighty careful work, too, for there was no timbering, and if the gravel hadn't been tight packed, they couldn't have got as far down as they did without a cave."

"Was there anything in the shaft to indicate who the miners were, or anything in the neighbourhood?" I asked. "You went down, of course?"

Haslom paused a moment in abstraction.

"Yes," he said at length, "both the rope and windlass were in fair condition. The climate is so dry that things won't rot, and the cracks in the wood, through the heat, hadn't weakened it much. I went down first, and—and—yes, there was the body of a man, dried up like a dummy, and a pick, shovel, and canteen."

"Were his clothes there, too?" I asked.

"Yes," said Haslom, "his clothes were still on his back. They wouldn't rot, either, you know, in that climate," he added with a forced laugh. "Now," he went on, suddenly, "you know it all."

What could I say after that? To tell the truth, I was so impressioned by the whole turn affairs had taken—so uttterly mystified and perplexed, to say the least of it—that when Haslom proposed, two days after, that I should accompany him on the trip; I at once agreed to do so.

It is an easy matter to make up a prospector's outfit. We didn't bother ourselves about much baggage. A couple of mules for ourselves to ride on, and a couple of *burros*, to pack our provisions—one of the latter useful little animals would have been enough, under ordinary circumstances, but we thought it advisable to take an extra one, exclusively for the purpose of packing water, as it was the lack of that vital necessity that we chiefly had to fear in penetrating the desolate region whither we were bound.

Two ten-gallon kegs accordingly balanced each other across the shoulders of the auxiliary animal, though there was no necessity for filling these till we reached our last water.

Early one fine morning in April, we took the road for San Bernardino, camped there the next night, and the following morning struck northward through the Cajon Pass, across the mountains, into the Mojave Desert. We experienced much more trouble with our animals than we had counted on.

The *burros* were tiring us out, and we had no mind to spend weeks upon our trip, besides the continual flog, flog, necessary to keep the animals in motion.

We were, accordingly, more than glad when a Mexican on horseback, overtook us in the Cajon, and, appreciating our dilemma and learning the direction we were taking, said he was going partly the same way himself, and offered his services. Terms were easily agreed on, the Mexican intimating that it was a good deal to him to have the privilege of camping with us on the lonely journey.

We got there on the third day after leaving San Bernardino, taking easy stages, for we didn't care to tire our beasts out, as the real hardship of the journey was still in store for them.

While the Mexican, whom we only knew by the name of Juan, was staking his horses out on the best feed he could find, and Haslom and I were cooking supper, he said to me:

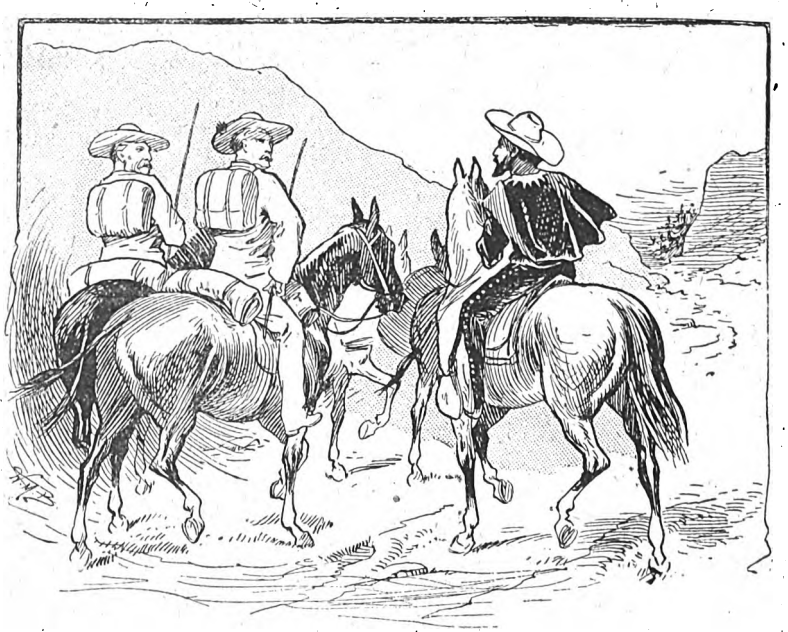
"Whitworth, there's something queer about that man. He makes me shudder every time I look at him."

Accustomed as I was to Haslom's own queer ideas and superstitions, I only laughed, and said:

"Nonsense, I think he's a nice, quiet fellow; and another thing is, he makes himself uncommonly useful."

"I can't help it," returned Haslom with an ominous shake of the head; "he reminds me strangely of my partner, Pedro Ramirez. He's so like him he might be his brother."

As Juan just then returned to camp, we said nothing more. I looked at him more closely, and could only see as he stood there in his short capote—which, by the way, he never removed, even when Haslom and myself were glad to strip to our shirts and overalls—that his form was slight and graceful; that his features, where not hidden by a glossy black beard, were delicate and regular; while his hands and feet were remarkably small and well-proportioned. In fact, I thought him a decided acquisition to our party, and determined to retain him as long as he would consent to stay with us, as I knew there was stiff work for us ahead.



A Mexican on horseback overtook us in the Cajon, and offered his services.

Next morning, at day-break, we loaded up our spare *burro* with full water-kegs, and, leaving the last trace of civilisation behind, struck northward into the desert. From the bend of the Mojave to the great, dry, alkali lake—known as the sink of the

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Amargosa, or Death Valley, where the ill-starred emigrant train, in early days, laid down their lives, almost to a man and woman, from thirst and the terrible heat of the natural oven—enclosed by a mountain range on either side, is not far in point of distance.

We, however, had something like fifty miles further to go, and to penetrate that part of Inyo County lying close to the Nevada line, which is the only spot in the whole of California that has never seen the theodolite, or heard the rattle of the surveyor's chain.

Accordingly, we urged our animals to the utmost, and camped that night on the banks of the Amargosa.

Next morning we were up with the morning star, and by sunrise sighted the isolated bluff at the mouth of the cañon, mentioned in the miner's directions as the spot where we had to begin to penetrate the mountains. Haslom rode forward leisurely, holding the chart in his hand, and looking carefully about him as he went along. Juan, with the *burros*, was trotting merrily ahead, for we had been only too glad to keep him, as he had not yet said anything about going, at which I, at any rate, was heartily glad.

"See!" said Haslom, suddenly, clutching my arm with a trembling hand; "he has turned up that cañon to the left—just the direction marked in the map. How did he know that?"

The man's face was white, and he could scarcely sit in his saddle. I felt sorry for his weakness.

Ten minutes later, Juan drove his *burros* unconcernedly over a divide, which also turned out to be the right direction. Ten minutes later, he took another right turn, along the top of a ridge, Haslom and I meanwhile following at about fifty yards in his rear. I could not help acknowledging to myself that the coincidence was extraordinary.

Well, to make a long story short, Juan, with the *burros*, kept ahead of us, and never missed a turn, as it was set down in the map, till at last, on crossing a ridge, we saw the alkali flats of Death Valley, shimmering beneath us in the sunlight, and, upon descending the hill a little way, found ourselves suddenly at the brink of the old shaft.

Haslom was trembling all over, and looked as white as a sheet as he dismounted. Juan was sitting on the ground, leisurely puffing a cigarette, the most unconcerned of the party.

I approached the edge of the shaft, and looked down. In the dim light I thought I distinguished the figure of a man lying at the bottom. The windlass, rope, and bucket were all there, the latter at the top, and the rope coiled round the drum.

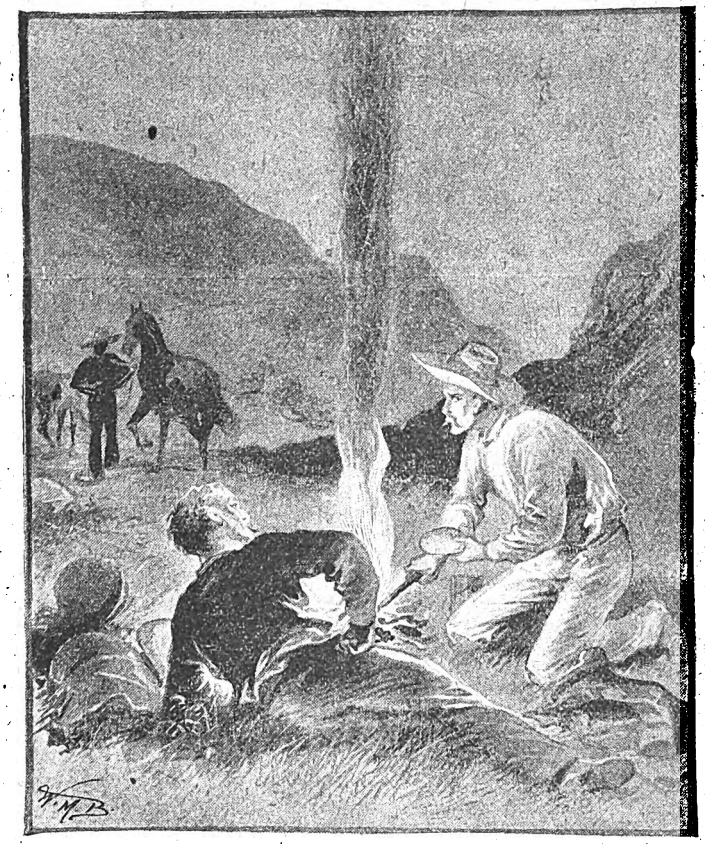
I asked Haslom if he would go down first, which he agreed to do, so I stood by the windlass while he got into the bucket, and I proceeded to lower him.

"There's a dead body here!" he presently shouted from below; "prepare to hoist. He must be got out of the way before anything can be done!"

We couldn't afford to waste any time. Minutes were precious, as our water was running short.

Presently, Haslom called out to hoist, and in two minutes the bucket appeared at the top, and Juan assisted me to take out the limp, mummy-like corpse of a man, about whose shrivelled skin and rattling bones hung the faded remains of an old blue suit.

Juan lifted the corpse very carefully, and, as I thought, tenderly, out, and laid it gently on one side. I could



While the Mexican was staking his horses out, Haslom and I were cooking supper.

hear Haslom's pick clanking at the bottom of the shaft.

Presently he shouted out:

"I've got enough for a showing. Let down the bucket, and hoist me up. We have no time to lose getting back."

I took hold of the windlass and began to lower, and when the bucket reached the bottom, I could hear Haslom piling rock into it. I looked down, and was watching him as well as I could, when I was startled by the swift, sudden blows of an axe upon the drum of the windlass.

I looked up and saw Juan standing with the axe uplifted to deal the wood another blow.

I made a jump for him, but, before I could arrest his arm, down came the axe, and windlass and rope both went crashing to the bottom of the shaft.

There was a moment of silence, and then, from the dim depths, came a yell, the like of which I hope never to hear again. The despairing shriek of a lost spirit might only fitly parallel what I heard.

I turned to Juan and said:

"What have you done?"

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"He left my brother to die in the pit, and now he is there himself," said the Mexican, quietly; "this dead man here is my brother, Pedro Ramirez. I am his sister, Dolores. I am, also, the fortune-teller of Los Angeles. I caused that report to be spread about me, and laid a trap for him. I stole his paper, three years ago, and hence could tell him that he would find it at my uncle's house, where I caused it to be put. I have been here alone before to satisfy myself of the truth of surmises. I have keen eyes, and could see my brother at the bottom of the pit. I came here to bury him. That is all."

The girl—she had now thrown off her capote, and I could see that she was a girl—took a pick and dug a shallow grave, as well as she could, in the sand. She then put the shrivelled corpse tenderly in, and raked the sand over it. Then she knelt down a minute and prayed.

"The grave is a shallow one," she said simply; "but it will serve to keep away the buzzards. Now get ready as fast as you can, and I will guide you out of these hills."

I looked up and saw Juan standing with the axe uplifted.

And now there rang from the bottom of the shaft a peal of demoniac laughter. It was ghastly in that awful solitude. Again and again it rang out in hideous merriment. It was evident that Huslom had lost his reason. At that short distance of thirty feet he had, no doubt, heard all that had been said. That, and the realization of his awful doom, had dethroned his senses.

There was no possible way of reaching or assisting him, situated as I was. I could certainly have let down my *riata*, and thus pulled up the fallen rope, but even that I could not, by mere brute force, have brought to the surface, as there was nothing whereon to rig a purchase, and the sand was so loose and friable, at the edge of the shaft, that it would have been dangerous to exert any pressure there.

Nor was there a stick of wood, in the whole country round, to make anything from. The only thing to be done was to summon assistance from the nearest station, and come to the rescue.

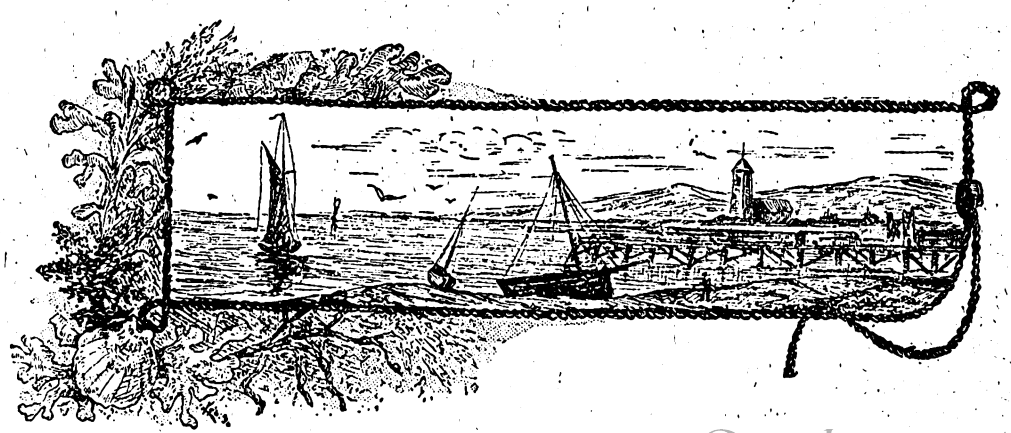
This I did, two days after, when I got to the bend of the Mojave, which I did alone, as the girl left me after seeing me safe on the plain.

I told my story, and succeded in enlisting two men to accompany me to the rescue of the imprisoned man. Suffice it to say, we never found the place, though we underwent extreme privations in the attempt.

It then became evident that Haslom must have perished; and sadly I gave up the quest.

And now, my young friend, you know why all the gold in Ophir would not tempt me to go prospecting any more in the Amargosa.

E. A. Pedford.



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CAMBRIDGE WINS!

"WELL, Vincent, and what says uncle?"

"Emmie, darling," and the young man went hurriedly forward and took the fair girl by the two hands, "your uncle is inexorable. He says that he has made up his mind, and that nothing shall force him to alter his decision."

"He appears to forget," and the young girl's lip curled disdainfully, "that I shall one day be of age to choose for myself. I hate Fred Weeks, and——"

"And you love me? Is it not so, my Emmie?"

Miss Streeter made no reply, but her companion evidently took her answer for granted, and folded her tenderly in his arms. They were both young—she not more than eighteen; he scarcely twenty-three. And they were both very much in love, only a hard-hearted uncle had resolved to separate them and to give his niece's hand to a wealthier suitor. Vincent Hollands was still at Oxford, and had yet a position and fortune to make for himself, for of money he possessed very little; Fred Weeks, on the contrary, was a man of the world, and owned a fine property in the West of England. Evidently this latter was the most eligible suitor for the hand of wealthy old Squire Streeter's orphan niece and only relative in the world. And old Squire Streeter was resolved that Emmie should become Mrs. Weeks and the mistress of Wealdstone Park.

"Not but what she has got an equal chance with myself in choosing her husband," the Squire told young Hollands during the interview which had just concluded, between the young Oxonian and his beloved one's uncle.

"If Oxford wins the boat race I choose her husband and shall most certainly marry her to my young friend Weeks; if, however, Cambridge takes the honours she can go to the dogs her own way."

"As much as to say, sir, that I would bring her to ruin and misery were I to marry her."

"If the cap fits, wear it, Vincent Hollands. What are your prospects in life? You have no money worth speaking of."

"I have talent, sir."

"So has many a poor wretch walking the streets of London, hungry and penniless."

"Besides, I have a fair amount of interest with certain influential personages."

"The interest of a few thousands in the bank is worth the interest of all the influential men in the world put together. Sovereigns are made of gold and are heavy; promises are made of air, and, as a rule, end in what they are made of. But all the talking in the world will not persuade me to alter my decision. This is a bet which I have made with my niece upon the boat race——"

"Without her consent, sir?"

"Without her consent or with it—it makes no difference. Or let us say that I have made it with Fred Weeks. Any other guardian of a young lady would immediately have closed with Weeks when he asked me for her hand, and promised to make such a handsome provision for her; but I, like a tender-hearted old fogey, said: 'No, give the girl an equal chance. If Oxford wins, you shall have her, Weeks; if Oxford loses, she shall marry her groom if she pleases, or any other equally ineligible suitor.'"

"You can scarcely call it an equal chance, sir," said Vincent, bitterly. "You know that Oxford is bound to win."

"I know nothing of the sort, since Oxford has not yet won, and the race has not been run. I believe you are one of the crew?"

"I am, sir."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the Squire heartily. "Do your best for the honour of your University, and remember, Vincent, my boy, that each stroke you pull is a stroke nearer towards placing your fair lady-love in the arms of a wealthier, and, consequently, more suitable husband."

"Yes, Emmie," said Vincent, as he was relating to the young girl the account of his interview with her uncle, "he actually reminded me of that fact, and he laughed heartily, as though it were the most capital joke in the world. I never heard of such a cold-hearted scheme—making a young lady's happiness or misery of her life-time depend upon a mere boat race! And then to call it an equal chance! Why, the betting is three to one upon Oxford. Everyone knows we are bound to win."

"Whether Oxford or Cambridge wins," said Miss Streeter simply, but firmly, "I shall never marry Fred Weeks. My uncle cannot force me to do that."

"No; but, as he told me in very plain terms, he could leave you penniless if you disobeyed him."

"And I suppose that Mr. Vincent Hollands would refuse to wed with a penniless bride."

"Emmie!" exclaimed the young Oxonian, folding his arms again round the beautiful girl, "you know that is not true. For my own sake I should prefer that you came to me poor and dependent; but you—you who have been reared in every luxury, accustomed to every pleasure that money can bestow—how could you battle with the world, with its poverty, and its consequent trials and sorrows? Would you not regret the step you had taken? Would you not inwardly blame me for

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having allowed you to take such a step? And to think, Emmie, darling, that I have to work my hardest to bring all this trouble upon you!" continued Vincent passionately. "Much as I love my *Alma Mater* I would fervently pray that Oxford might lose this infernal race. Oh, if the race were only a very close one, and as were nearing home I could be suddenly taken ill or that my oar should snap in two! Cambridge then might shoot ahead, and——"

"Vincent," exclaimed the young girl, almost fiercely, "what are you saying? You deem me too daintily brought up to marry a poor man, but did you ever think for a moment that I would wed with a dishonourable one? No, my poor boy," she continued in her usual loving manner, "I know you did not mean for a moment what you said. Act as though there were nothing more serious at stake upon the race than the glory and honour of winning, and then leave the result, whatever it may be, in the all-wise hands of Providence. I have told you that I should never marry Fred Weeks; upon yourself alone, Vincent, it depends whether I become your wife or not."

With his arm clasped around her waist, they left the shady arbour in which they had been standing, and strolled slowly down a narrow pathway in the direction of the house.

Ere they had completely disappeared from sight, a tall, elegantly-dressed man crept noiselessly from the back of the arbour and gazed after the pair of lovers, a merciless look of hatred gleaming from his dark eyes.

"No," he hissed between his closed teeth, "you will never marry me, I know; but neither shall you ever wed that whining schoolboy! Taken ill! The oar break in two! And he is just mean hound enough either to feign the one or to actually succeed in doing the other. We shall see, Vincent Hollands, what the all-wise hands of Providence, as our pious little girl terms it, can fashion in your favour."

He took a cigar out of his pocket, and having carefully lit it, strolled slowly by a different pathway towards his friend's house.

* * * * *

It is the morning of the race. Though still early in spring, the sun shone as gloriously warm and bright as on a summer's day. The grand old river seemed proud to carry the hundreds of joyous burdens upon its broad bosom, and gayly reflected the deep azure of the sky in its tranquil depths.

From Putney onwards, the towing-path was literally packed with loud-voiced, merry onlookers. Men of rather horsey appearance with note-books in their hands, and field-glasses at their sides; city clerks, fortunate enough to have the morning free, endeavouring to cut the heavy swell—and failing; country bumpkins who mistook every boat which scudded merrily by for one of the University crew and cheered lustily; dashing men about town with heavy moustache, and eyeglass in eye, looking as though the whole performance were too much of a bore to be endured; rowdy Harriets, unkempt and unwashed, with idiotic fringe and long, loud-coloured feathers; gay ladies of the chorus with noisy laugh and powdered face; haughty dames and aristocratic demoiselles, wearing abundantly one or other of the two blues; Italians with ice-creams, costers with apples, oranges, or nuts, men selling the colours of the rival crews—merry shouts of laughter, noisy disputes, screams of frightened women, deep cursings of angry men, hoarse cries of costers vaunting their wares, shrill barkings of dogs, loud cheerings of the merry parties as they pulled swiftly by in their light boats—and above all the sun shining glorious and bright in a cloudless sea of blue.

At last the glad cry arose, "They're off! They're off!" and the eyes of all were intent upon the river, each one apparently taking the deepest interest in the race, although, in the opinion of most, the end was already a foregone conclusion. Oxford was bound to win! But at any rate if Oxford was bound to win, their rivals seemed determined to make the race as hard a one for them as they possibly could.

Over the greater portion of the course the two boats were almost abreast, and the excitement of the spectators was intense and rapidly increasing with each stroke of the oars. Loud shouts of "Cambridge! Cambridge! Oxford! Oxford!" rang upon the air. "Bravo, Dark Blue! Go ahead! Light Blues for ever!" And still the two boats kept as near as possible abreast, whilst the onlookers were almost hoarse with cheering.

As the crews were nearing home, however, the Oxonians broke steadily though slowly away from their opponents, and it was soon apparent to all wearers of the light blue that their colours must come off but second best in the grand national race. The dark blue adherents were vociferous in their shouts and cheers, and the winning-post was almost gained when—what had happened?

The Oxford boat seemed to stand still a moment and sway as if it had received some sudden shock, then it sped along again, but not so swift as before, whilst the Cambridge crew, straining every nerve, caught up to their original position. For a single second they ran again abreast, and then the Light Blues, swift and steady as an arrow in its flight, shot speedily ahead, and won the race by nearly half a boat's length. The tranquil air of the spring morning was well-nigh driven frantic with the shouts and cries and cheers and wild halloos. But amidst them all the vague question passed from one to the other—What had happened? Then the answer came. An oar of one of the Oxford crew had broken just almost at the last moment; and then, again—but only in whispers this time—that it had purposely been broken, and that the race had been wilfully lost.

Most of the papers on the next day were silent as to this last wild suspicion, although one or two of them did offer some slight inuendoes to that effect, but these latter were at once silenced by the Fellows of the Oxford University, who most strenuously denied any suspicion of foul play on the part of their crew, which denial was just as strenuously confirmed by the Light Blues. But it was whispered in many a fashionable West-end club that the suspicion was, in fact, no suspicion at all, but a real, indisputable fact. An oar had been so severely damaged before the crew had started on their race that the only wonder was that it had borne the strain of rowing so long.

The University boat race—a fact utterly unknown before—had most deliberately and wilfully been given away. But the general public knew nought of this, and the sad affair was soon hushed up; though one man was henceforth dishonoured in the eyes of all who knew him or of whom he cared to know.

On the following morning Emmie Streeter received the following letter:

"Dear Miss Streeter,—After the conversation which took place between us on the afternoon when I had the memorable interview with you uncle, I do not know if you will believe me when I most emphatically assert that

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I am innocent of the cowardly action laid to my charge. I worked my hardest from first to last in order to win the race, and if the oar had been tampered with before the race had started it was without my knowledge and most certainly not at my instigation. But the world knows no difference between a dishonourable man and a dishonoured one. The latter I know I am in the eyes of all, and yet through no fault of mine. Therefore, Miss Streeter, I feel it my duty to resign any pretensions I may have had to your hand. England shall henceforth know me no more. All I ask, all I plead for is, that in memory of the happy hours we have spent together, you will will do your best to believe in my innocence. Whither I shall go I am unable yet to say; but of this, Emmie, be sure that as long as this poor heart of mine beats it will be with love for you, as long as these lips can speak they will pray for your happiness in this world and in the next. "VINCENT HOLLAND."

"My poor, poor boy!" exclaimed the young girl as the hot tears streamed down her pale, sorrow-stricken cheeks. "How could he think for a moment that I should believe him guilty? But he will come to-morrow. He surely cannot leave England for ever without even saying farewell."

But the days and weeks and even months passed on, and he came not. And yet the fair girl watched and waited patiently—in the fragrant, freshening morn, when the noontide sun shone forth in a sea of cloudless blue, or when the stars were shining here and there, through fleecy clouds in a dim, shadowy sky, watched and waited through verdant spring and glowing summer seasons, through sombre autumns, and drear wintertides; watched and waited till the spirits drooped and the heart grew sick, and life seemed one long miserable twilight, where one knew not what was false and what was true.

And ten long years passed away, and Vincent was seated on the trunk of a fallen tree, resting from his labours, in the fairy land of California. He had been an exile in many countries, but had found no balm for a wounded heart. He had suffered the pangs of misery and hunger of an unsuccessful gold-digger, but he had laboured on with a wild perseverance—not for the sake of money—that was useless to him now, but because in hard work and untiring labours he found the nearest approach to peace and consolation. And yet of late fortune had favoured him.

He was wealthy beyond all what in his more youthful days he had ever dared to hope or to expect. And as he now sat upon the fallen tree he held a newspaper in his hands. It was an old one which some new miner had brought with him to the camp, and in it he had read the notice of the death of one whom he had known in those old glorious days before shame and dishonour had been heaped upon his head.

It was the death of Frederick Weeks, and the article concluded by saying that, as the late proprietor of Wealdstone Park had died unmarried, the property would pass into the hands of a very distant relative with whom Weeks had never agreed, and whom, so it was reported, he had most cordially hated.

And as the sun went down he was still seated motionless upon the fallen tree, heedless of the low cadence of the rustling leaves wooing the answering murmur of the water, heedless of the waning evening and the wan, young moon appearing like a spectre in the sky. Thoughts of his far-away home had filled his breast; longing to see again the dear, familiar scenes of boyhood had taken possession of him, and, above all, the wild wish to look upon her face again, and then to wander away once more and hide himself from the eyes of all until death should release him from the shame and dishonour which had clung to him.

And so he left California and returned to England. But it was with open arms that Squire Streeter received him.

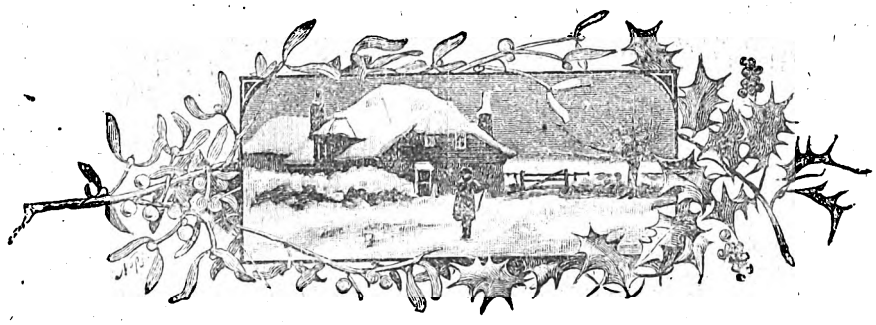
"My dear fellow," he said, "why did you leave us like that? Neither Emmie nor myself ever believed you guilty of that mean act, as my niece will tell you herself when you see her. We have spent a little fortune in advertising for you, especially since that scoundrel Weeks' death."

"Why especially since his death?" Vincent asked in wonderment.

"Because it was he that had the oar tampered with. On his death-bed he asked to see me, and confessed that it was he who had it done, but would not say how, or who assisted him in his diabolical scheme. He had overheard your conversation with Emmie in the arbour, and as he then discovered that my niece would never marry him he was resolved that she should never wed you, and he took the best means in his power to prevent it. But there is Emmie herself coming in through the gateway. Go to her. I do not think she will wish you to leave England again."

And in the same arbour in which he had once before taken her in his arms he clasped her to his breast again, and the long ten years of weary watching and waiting, of separation and sorrow, were forgotten in the blissful ecstasy of the moment.

E. V. W.



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. . Her Lesson . .

SHE was a wild little piece, with her pretty, dimpled face full of mischief—always saying extravagant things and giving people wrong impressions, and yet she bore the important title of—Mrs. St. John MacDonald. Her husband, who was decidedly grave and sedate, thought she did not support his name with sufficient dignity.

Everyone wondered how two people so totally unlike as St. John MacDonald and Elsie Montgomery had ever been drawn together, but it is a true saying that people like their opposites.

"My dear," said Mr. MacDonald one day, as he entered the apartment where his bride was sitting. "I have heard something very strange."

"What was it?" asked Elsie.

"I heard that your parents were very much opposed to our union, and that we were obliged to elope at night, by jumping out of the back window, and that then we had gone immediately to the registry office and had been married without the knowledge of your parents who, in consequence, had disinherited you, and had refused to have anything more to do with you."

"How very strange," exclaimed Elsie, "how could such a report have originated?"

"Have you not said something in fun which might have given rise to it?"

"No," said Elsie, thoughtfully, and then she added: "Oh, now I do remember, the other day, when Flora Nelson was here—you know she has such a perfect horror of old gentlemen. She asked me in her innocent way, how I came to marry a person so much older than myself.

"'For my part,' said she, 'I never should wish to marry an old man, and pa and ma wouldn't let me if I did.'

"She is such an honest little creature, and always takes everything so literally that I wished to astonish her, so I replied: 'I sprang out of the back window at night, when my parents were asleep, and I was married quite early the next morning.' I suppose that must have been the way the story originated, and it has gained, of course, by circulation."

"But, Elsie, what did possess you to say such a thing?" continued Mr. MacDonald.

"Only for mischief; I meant to undeceive her before she left me, but I forgot it."

"Do you think it right to say what is not true, even in fun, Elsie?" asked her husband, with a grave look.

"But it really was strictly true, St. John; for do you not recollect my telling you that the night before we were married, I became alarmed by a cry of fire next door, and I sprang out of the window which was near the ground, and as soon as the first feeling of fear was over, I returned to waken my father and mother."

"What you said then was true in the letter, but not so in the spirit?" asked Mr. MacDonald, as he gazed earnestly into his wife's face.

"Now, grandpa," said Elsie, as she stroked down his whiskers, "please don't preach me a sermon, for I was only in fun when I said it, and I think people might understand me; everyone is so dreadfully matter-of-fact."

Elsie laughed and wondered what made her husband so sober, and wished that he was a little more playful; while he in his turn, wished that his wife was not quite so full of spirits. But he had still considerable annoyance to go through with, before Elsie gave up this little propensity.

It was all in vain that he talked to her about dignity.

"I am afraid, my dear, that your fun will give me considerable trouble," said Mr. MacDonald to his wife one day, after another strange report had reached his ears—the result of Mrs. MacDonald's love of fun.

"I am very sorry," said Elsie, as she raised her sweet, childish face to his.

As he bent down to impress a kiss on those rosy lips, he felt half tempted to give up the plan which he had formed for preventing further mischief, but he recollected that many times her love for fun had drawn them into trouble, and with an effort he resolved to carry it through.

"I shall have to leave you for a few days, my dear."

"Leave me!" she exclaimed—"for what?"

"I am obliged to go away to-morrow morning, on business, but I will make my stay as short as possible."

It was with a heavy heart that Elsie retired that night. She could not bear the thought of being

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separated from her husband even for a few days, and her ever active imagination conjured up all sorts of dreadful things which might happen to one or the other of them before they should meet again. But it was necessary for him to go, and the next morning she followed him to the door, received his parting kiss and then returned to her room to cry.

In the afternoon the bright sun seemed to invite her out for a walk, and she accordingly went. She met a number of her friends, but some bowed coldly, while others passed her by with a scornful look. At one time she discovered two ladies conversing together and looking at her. What could it mean? Then she caught the words:

"Very strange, is it not?"

"Yes," was the reply; "but then they were so unsuited to each other, that one can scarcely wonder at it."

"That is true," continued the first, "he is so very grave, and she is so full of mischief."

As Elsie walked quickly on wondering what they could mean, and if it were possible that they referred to her, she lost the remainder of their conversation.

She returned to her house feeling sick at heart and earnestly longing for her husband to come back to her. What she had heard puzzled her; she felt sure that some false report had been circulated, but how she could not tell.

While she was musing on this subject the door opened and Mrs. Kerman was announced. Elsie rose to receive her visitor, who remarked in a very commiserating tone:

"You poor little creature! I have come in on purpose to condole with you."

"Thank you," said Elsie, mistaking her meaning. "I almost think I need condolence, being left alone in this great house, with only the servants."

"Yes," continued Mrs. Kerman, "but you may be sure that every one will take your part, for people always do sympathize with the ladies you know. I think he was a perfect wretch to leave you, and so soon too."

Her meaning began to dawn upon Elsie's mind, and she exclaimed almost fiercely:

"Of whom are you speaking?"

"Mr. MacDonald," replied Mrs. Kerman, in some surprise at Elsie's excited manner. "I heard that he had quarrelled with you and that was the reason of the separation and knowing that you must feel lonely, I hastened to offer my sympathy, trusting that you would excuse the intrusion."

Our heroine drew herself up with considerable dignity, as she replied:

"Allow me to say that you have been quite misinformed; this is the first time that I have heard of any quarrel, and the separation was caused by some business which has called my husband away for a few days."

Mrs. Kerman hastened to apologize and soon after left the house. Then came honest little Flora Nelson, who threw her arm around Elsie's neck and exclaimed in a tone of sincere sympathy:

"My poor, dear Mrs. MacDonald, how sorry I do feel for you!"

"Why do you feel sorry for me, Flora?" asked Elsie, in a calm voice.

"Oh, because—because—of this dreadful rumour," said Flora, hesitatingly.

"That my husband and I had quarrelled and separated?" said Elsie.

"You have heard of it then, and it is not true?"

"Oh, yes, I have heard of it, and I have also been condoled with, but I cannot imagine what gave rise to such an idea."

Flora did not hurry away as Mrs. Kerman had done, and Elsie found it a comfort to have a friend with her. She was obliged to receive visits of condolence all the afternoon, and in the evening her gentlemen friends came "to offer their sympathies," as they said, but Elsie thought it was to satisfy their curiosity.

Everyone expressed such deep sorrow for her that she almost began to think she must be a very unhappy being, and she became quite wrought up to a state of wretchedness.

This state of affairs continued until the return of Mr. MacDonald, which took place rather sooner than his wife had anticipated.

Elsie ran to meet him, and throwing herself into his arms, burst into tears.

"What ails my pet?" he asked, as he kissed her affectionately.

"Oh, St. John," sobbed Elsie, "there has been such a strange report circulated throughout the whole place—they said that you and I had quarreled, and that was the reason you had gone and left me."

A quizzical look came over MacDonald's face as he replied:

"What very strange reports, my dear, gain credence! How could this have arisen, do you know?"

His wife answered:

"I have not the slightest idea; I am sure it could not have been from anything that I said, this time."

St. John MacDonald passed his hand thoughtfully across his face as he remarked slowly: "Could it have been from a remark that I made on the morning I left you? I recollect meeting one of the neighbours who inquired how you were. I replied that you were very well when I last saw you, but that we had had a few words together and separated. I noticed that he looked rather surprised at my answer."

"Oh! St. John. How could you?" exclaimed Elsie.

"Why, my dear, it was only in fun, and then it was strictly true; but people are so very matter-of-fact—anyone might know that I would not leave you, no matter for how short a time, without having a few parting words with you."

"But it has placed me in a very strange position. I did not think that of you, St. John."

Mr. MacDonald folded his little wife in his arms and asked to be forgiven. Elsie had generosity enough to see how much trouble she had often been the cause of bringing upon him in a similar way, and now, in her turn, she laughed heartily over the mortification she had suffered.

Her husband's remedy proved a most effectual one, and from that time she was more careful to preserve truth in the spirit, as well as in the letter, of what she said.

D. I. Mentor.

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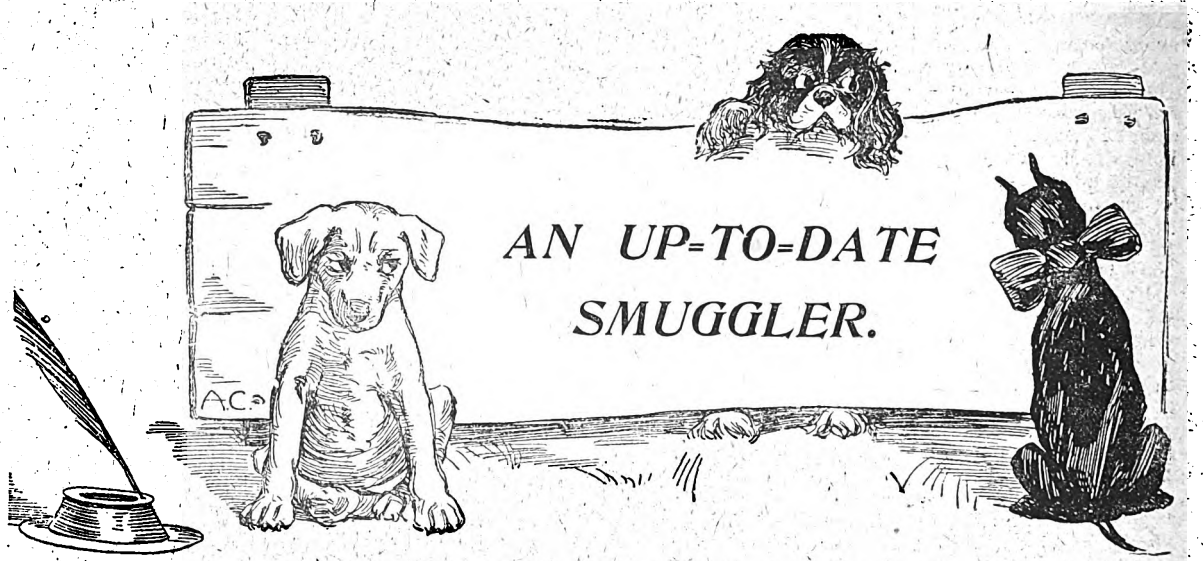

AN UP-TO-DATE SMUGGLER.

MANY people seem to imagine that a purser on board one of our big Atlantic liners has got a remarkable easy time of it; in short, that his position may not be inaptly described as a bed of roses. They appear to think that his duties chiefly consist of allotting the passengers their seats at table, assisting in the church service on Sundays, and making himself friendly and agreeable all round.

Let me say at once—and I speak from pretty considerab'e experience—that such is very far from being the case. Nowadays, when one of these ocean greyhounds can skim across the Atlantic well within the week, the purser has his hands pretty full from start to finish.

If he had only to reckon with his ordinary duties, it would be right enough. But he has various other matters to attend to, and that is exactly where the rub comes in. When you have upwards of a thousand souls, drawn from almost every class in life, cooped up together on board ship, you are bound to have some very singular experiences. And whenever anything goes wrong, if there is a complaint to be investigated, or a squabble between two passengers to be adjusted, it all falls upon the shoulders of the unfortunate purser.

Strange things happen almost every voyage—stranger, perhaps, than most people have any idea of. Someone has very truly remarked that nothing has ever occurred, or is likely to occur, that London has not already witnessed. And after all, a modern Atlantic liner is only a little slice of that great cosmopolitan city transferred to the ocean. The extraordinary incidents, the mysteries—ay, and occasionally the tragedies—which come to light on board one of these floating villages are truly surprising.

Take the case of the Amiable Old Lady, for instance. That is what we generally cal'ed her when speaking of her among ourselves, but on the passenger list she figured as Mrs. Franklin Richards. A pleasant, chatty, good-tempered soul she was, rather prim and old-fashioned, it is true, and a bit prosy at times. She was well-known on board our boat, having crossed with us half-a-dozen times at least. Indeed, she seemed to have taken quite a fancy to the ship and to the officers, for she made it a point to wait a week or two for our vessel rather than sail in another.

Her prime favourite amongst us, however, was the doctor—a big, burly, jovial Scotsman named Grant. As Mrs. Franklin Richards seemed to be plentifully endowed with this world's goods—her money being entirely under her own control, too—and having no near kith or kin, the worthy doctor was most assiduous in his attentions. No doubt he entertained a reasonable hope that if he got firmly established in her good graces, the name of Robert Eustace Grant, M.D., might ultimately find a place in her will. That he had fairly good grounds for this expectation could not be denied, for the old lady herself had gone so far as to throw out sundry hints of a substantial legacy from time to time.

And so the burly doctor laid himself out to get on the right side of Mrs. Franklin Richards. The number of perscriptions he wrote, the quantity of medicine he made up, was truly surprising. He was always ready with his arm when she wished to go on deck, invited her to afternoon tea in his cabin, and listened gravely to her mild lectures upon the evils of indulging too freely in tobacco and gin cocktails, to both of which creature comforts he had a decided leaning. She kept him well supplied with reading matter, in the shape of tracts and other serious literature, which, I regret to say, he promrtly conver'ed into pipe lights the moment her back was turned.

On one voyage out, when the amiable old lady gave us the pleasure of her company once more, the doctor seemed to make greater headway with her than ever; so much so, indeed, that he took to studying the stock and share lists secretly, with a view to selecting a suitable investment for his legacy when the time came. On reaching New York he took a cordial and even affectionate leave of our p ssenger, begged her to be careful of her health—the humbug!—and hoped he would soon have the gratification of seeing her again.

Though I took a lively interest in this little bye-play, and it afforded me some amusement to watch its development, the whole thing was driven out of my head for the time being by another and more serious matter that cropped up a day or two later.

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One morning I was somewhat surprised to receive a visit from a well-known New York detective, with whom I happened to be acquainted. He came in looking very grave and preoccupied, as if he had some weighty matter upon his mind.

"Well, Mr. Morse," I said, as I greeted him him, "what are you after now?"

"Diamonds," he replied, briefly

"Stolen?" I asked.

"No."

"What, then?"

"Smuggled."

I was not altogether surprised to hear it, for, in common with the public generally, I had gathered from the newspapers that diamonds were being smuggled into the States in considerable quantities of late. How the culprit, whoever he was, managed to get the stones through the custom-house undetected was a mystery.

The officials there are a particularly shrewd and wide-awake set of men, and it takes a remarkably clever customer to throw dust in their eyes.

They are not often imposed upon, you may be sure. They seem to know at a glance whether a trunk has a false bottom or not, or if an innocent-looking hand-bag is all that it pretends. Cigars they appear to detect by scent; they swoop down on lace, no matter in what unlikely corner it may be stowed away. As for diamonds—well, it is there they come out strong. I have known them to pounce upon an ordinary, silver-mounted walking stick, unscrew the top, and discover a nice little nest of gems secreted in a hollow of the cane.

"I have heard that something of the kind has been going on for some time past," I remarked, as the detective sat down.

"For six months or thereabouts," he replied. "As long ago as that, a parcel of gems, said to be worth over fifty thousand dollars, was got through. How it was done, no one could tell. The Custom's people got a wigging over it, and kept their eyes open afterwards, you may depend. But in spite of their vigilance, in spite of all their precautions, the same thing occured again and again. Though they were put upon their mettle, and resorted to all kinds of artifices, they couldn't place a stop upon it."

"He must be a clever rascal, this smuggler," I put in.

"So it would seem. It is plain he has hit upon some entirely new and original method, for all the old dodges have been played out long ago. The extraordinary part of it is, that the secret agents abroad, who supply us with information on matters of this kind, appear to be just as much at sea as we are over here."

"Do you think it is the work of a gang?" I asked.

"I am strongly of opinion that it is not," he answered.

"Why so?"

"Well, if there were two or three in it, one or other of them would have been sure to split before this, for there is a tidy little reward out. Take my word for it, this is a single-man job. And," he added, in tones of conviction, looking straight across at me, "whoever the smuggler is, he came over in your ship on the very last voyage."

"The deuce!"

"That he did. See here; your boat got in on Monday last—the only liner which arrived that day, as it so happens. On Tuesday, according to information which has reached us, a packet of gems is handed over to a broker in Chicago, without enriching Uncle Sam's treasury by a single, solitary cent. What do you make of that? Now the question is, did you spot any likely party on board—anyone whom you might have cause to suspect?"

"No," I replied, running over the list of passengers in my mind, "unless your man came steerage——"

"Pooh!" he interrupted. "that's not likely. He patronizes the saloon—travels in style, you may be sure."

"I am sorry I cannot assist you," I said. "What steps do you propose to take?"

"Well I don't know," he returned. "It is just possible I may run across with you when you are going back, so as to make inquiries on the other side."

During the remainder of our stay in New York I saw no more of him; nor, when the passenger list was handed to me, could I find his name therein. Something must have occurred in the meantime to make him alter his plans.

But if the detective failed to turn up, we had an agreeable surprise by finding the Amiable Old Lady back again amongst us. It appears that she had received a cable from England to say that an old friend of hers was dangerously ill, which caused her to cut short her stay and hurry home.

The doctor was overjoyed, of course. He determined to make the most of this lucky chance; and if that matter of the legacy was not brought to a satisfactory issue, once and for all, before we reached Liverpool, it certainly would not be his fault.

But on this occasion, much to his disgust, he found himself confronted by two formidable rivals for the old lady's favour, who seemed in a fair way to oust him altogether. They were the very opposite extremes as far as their calling went; one being a High Church clergyman, the other, a Salvation Army captain. They both laid vigorous siege to Mrs. Franklin Richards, however, and each endeavoured to win her over to his own particular doctrines. One day she seemed to favour the parson; the next she inclined strongly to the follower of General Booth. All the way across it was a vexed question as to which of the two would carry the day, and whether she would ultimately be induced to leave her money to a Clergy Benevolent Fund, or to endow a Salvation Army shelter. Between the two, the doctor saw that legacy of his slipping through his fingers, and was not a little savage in consequence.

Late in the following autumn Mrs. Franklin Richards returned to the States, her friend being quite restored to health. By a singular chance the two religious enthusiasts also happened to be on board. The doctor scowled fiercely at them when they put in an appearance, but they took little notice of his black looks. They returned to the attack upon the Amiable Old Lady with renewed vigour.

But my friend Grant did not abandon the field, not he! He did his best to cut out both the Church and the Army. He had one great pull over his rivals owing to the fact that he could advise the old lady as to the proper treatment of her pet—a tiny little toy terrier, which she always carried about with her.

This canine mite was the laughing-stock of the whole ship. It looked for all the world like a fluffy ball of wool, with two little beady eyes peeping out timidly from under the fleecy hair that fell over them. Whenever it got on the ground, it had the queerest habit of scooting away under a seat, or trying to hide itself in some dark corner.

The old lady's attachment for this diminutive creature was something extraordinary. She seemed to regard it

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as her greatest treasure, never allowed anyone to touch it, but herself, and was always in a fever if it was out of her sight for a moment.

The Salvation Army man—whose name, by the way, was Coates, bestowed a good deal of notice upon this wretched little creature. He frequently attempted to coax it to him, and endeavoured to stroke it; but whenever he made any advances of this kind, the old lady snatched her pet away at once.

I must confess that I had my doubts about this same gentleman, and was more than half inclined to put him down as an imposter. Oddly enough, there was something about him which struck me as familiar, though I couldn't for the life of me imagine where I had seen him before. More than once I noticed that he gave me a queer sort of look, which I was quite at a loss to understand.

Throughout the entire voyage, up to the very evening we steamed into New York harbour, he never wavered in his attachment to the Amiable Old Lady. Even then, while the passengers were getting ready to disembark, he kept hovering around her, as if on the watch to render her any little service she might stand in need of. The High Church clergyman vied with him in this respect. The anxiety they displayed regarding her was really touching. She could hardly move a step without one or the other of them dangling at her heels.

At last she was ready to go on shore. She took a friendly leave of the doctor—who was rather down in the mouth, poor fellow—and stepped towards the gangway. Coates, who clung to her like a shadow, offered to relieve her of her pet, which was coddled up in her arms. The old lady drew back in alarm. She wouldn't hear of such a thing! What! allow anyone to handle her precious mite but herself? Never!

It was then that a strange, a most surprising thing happened. Before a single soul could interfere, before one of us was aware of his intention even, Coates stretched out his hand, and snatched the creature from the old lady's arms!

My word, what a scene and a fuss there was, to be sure. Mrs. Richards screamed, and seemed to be within an ace of fainting. The High Church clergyman, however, promptly stepped forward, took her by the arm, and led her gently, but firmly away.

As for me, I instantly elbowed my way through the crowd, and the next moment was at Coates' side.

"What is the meaning of this, sir?" I demanded angrily.

"Oh, nothing much," he answered, with a grin, as if it was a remarkably good joke. "Only—I smell a rat!

"Smell a rat!" I exclaimed. "What the deuce do you mean?"

"Just step across to the custom-house, and you'll learn soon enough."

Something in his tones, and in the altered expression of his face, seemed so strangely familiar that I looked at him more narrowly. Then, and not till then, did the truth dawn upon me.

It was Morse, the detective!

Utterly at a loss to comprehend the meaning of it all, and in a state of mind bordering upon bewilderment, I followed him mechanically to the custom-house. There I found the Amiable Old Lady with a handkerchief to her eyes, as if she was quite overcome. Standing somewhat grimly by her side, with the air of a custodian was the High Church clergyman.

Morse immediately turned his attention to his prize. What he did to it exactly I couldn't quite make out; but, to my great surprise, my utter amazement, the fluffy skin suddenly came off in his hands, and out popped—a white rat!

He let the creature scuttle away where it pleased, without even turning his head to look after it. He was fully occupied at the moment with the covering in which it had been clothed. And no wonder! For—oh, the deceitfulness of human nature!—the lining of that skin was literally stuffed with diamonds!

"So much for the pet," said the detective, turning to me. "We will leave it to one of the female searchers to work a somewhat similar transformation in Mademoiselle Pauline here."

"What!" I cried. "She is not Mrs. Franklin Richards, then?"

"No more than you are."

"Nor—nor even elderly?" I hazarded.

"Well on the right side of thirty, my dear sir. She is a young lady of French extraction, and one of the most clever adventuresses in Europe. I need not tell you she is a born actress, a remarkably good hand at making up, and as deep as a draw-well. I think, however, she will be compelled to retire from the scene a little while now."

And so, of course, she was. I confess that I found it hard to have my illusion destroyed in this rude manner, for really I had taken quite a fancy to the Amiable Old Lady myself.

It subsequently transpired that the High Church clergyman was none other than one of Morse's fellow detectives. The pair of them having their suspicions aroused regarding the *bona fides* of Mrs. Franklin Richards, had followed her to the Continent, where they found she was regularly employed by dishonest brokers to smuggle diamonds into the States.

In conclusion, may I be permitted to offer a word of advice to the reader? If he should ever take it into his head to visit America, and happen to fall in with Dr. Robert Eustace Grant on board ship, let him beware of touching upon the topic of old ladies and their legacies.

The doctor does not take kindly to the subject.

J. L. Hornibrook.

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The Countersign.

WHILE my maternal grandfather was commanding the—then—H. E. I. Co's—now—Royal Artillery at St. Thomas' Mount near Madras, there came a time when some disturbance was expected; one of the consequences being the rigid inforcement of rules relating to passwords, countersigns, and such like. Patrols perambulated the cantonment and neighbouring country at all hours of the night and day; one European officer slept at the Quarter Guard of each Native Infantry Regiment at the Mount and at the contiguous stations of Palaveram and Poonamallee; some British gunners at the first named place occupied the Main Guard in addition to the usual *Jemadars* party of Sepoys, and sentries were posted in profusion. But the alarm in due course quietened down, and though precautions were not relaxed, people began to breathe again, and amusements and entertainments were resumed.

One night, Colonel Blundell—my grandfather—and his daughters attended a ball given by the artillery to a popular commander-in-chief, who was on the point of leaving for England.

All went well; the function was a grand success; the Chief made a felicitous speech; dancing was resumed after supper, and the fun grew so fast and furious that the Colonel deemed it prudent to take his daughters home.

Most of the married people had already left, for it was nigh upon two in the morning; rather a late hour for those days.

On the Colonel's carriage being called for however, it did not put in its appearance at the porch, and investigation elicited the fact that the coachman and attendant brace of horsekeepers had emulated the *Dorai marai* (gentlefolks) in their hilariousness, and were all three lying hopelessly drunk! Now, the Colonel or even one of his daughters could have "tooled" the turn out home, or they could have obtained the loan of a conveyance from someone, but as their house was but a ten minutes' walk across the *maidan* or parade ground, the night fine, and the road good, the quartette elected to go on foot,—to the ruin however of the ladies' dancing shoes, which, at that period were of a particularly flimsy build. About half way across the *maidan* stood a magazine; a bomb-proof building, fenced in by a breastwork, and guarded by sepoy sentries,—one on each flank. Here the trouble began. No sooner had the Colonel and his ladies come within the prescribed distance than Jack Sepoy ported his musket and shouted "Hookumdare?" (Who comes there?)

"Friend!" replied Colonel Blundell.

"Bance friend and give the countersign!" (Advance friend, and give the countersign) responded the sentry, his piece still at the port.

Not one of the four knew the countersign, for the custom prevailed—and still does—for the word to be given to the servants; and here they were without a single follower! But the colonel—never an oriental linguist—mustered what little Hindustani he knew, explained their quandary to the sentry, told him who he was, and asked to be allowed to pass.

No, the sentry would not grant the permission.

"Call the *Naique* (Corporal) of the guard," said the Colonel; and on that individual appearing, the officer went over the same ground again; but to no purpose: the N. C. O. was as strict—call it obdurate if you will—as the private; so there they stood; the sentry repeating: "Bance friend and give the countersign," Colonel Blundell as persistently averring his ignorance thereof.

The officer's patience was fast wearing out; he hoped someone would be coming along, and from whom he could learn the word, and thus get free of the dilemma; but no, as fate had it, not a soul happened to be going in that direction. "Don't you know me?" again asked the Colonel, in execrable Hindustani, approaching within a step or two of the N. C. O., "if you disbelieve my words bring a lantern and see; you will find me to be what I told you; the Officer commanding the Artillery." "Sir," replied the *Naique*, "were you the Commander-in-chief himself, you could not pass without giving the countersign; our orders are strict, and we cannot break them," saying which he turned back into the guard room; and the sentry resumed his "Bance friend and give the countersign."

"Countersign be hanged!" roared the exasperated old officer.

"Pass friend and all ees well!" cried the sentry, smartly coming to the shoulder, and permitting the party to proceed,—greatly to their astonishment and satisfaction!

"Butler," asked the Colonel of his *major domo*, as that worthy jumped up to receive his master at the porch, "do you know the countersign for the day?"

"Yes, your honour. 'Penang.'"

At this, the Colonel and his daughters laughed heartily; for it immediately dawned upon them that the officers strong expression as conveyed in the words "be hanged" had sounded in the sentry's ears as "Penang;" an error which they were quite ready to excuse under the circumstances!

H. HERVEY.

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Briton or Boer?

By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

INTRODUCTION.

For years past Britain and the Transvaal have been spoiling for a fight, and it was left to that well-known author, Mr. George Griffith, to write this strong and exciting serial nearly four years ago graphically describing a huge war between the two countries.

The story, coming so soon after the Jameson Raid, was read with unusual interest.

Now that Briton and Boer are in deadly conflict it will be interesting to read the story, and see how far the imagination of the author has actually come true.

SUMMARY OF OPENING CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.—The scene opens on the Rand. It is the eve of Amajuba day, and a State ball is being given. To this comes Prince Paul Regna, a Polish nobleman, and his daughter, Princess Vavara. They are introduced to Dr. Leyds.

CHAPTER II.—Dr. Leyds returns to Pretoria to attend a midnight consultation at the Government buildings. The Prince's rooms are in the Grand Hotel opposite. By tapping the wires, which cross the street at this point, the Prince and his daughter overhear all that goes on, and telegraph the result by secret code to Europe.

CHAPTERS III. AND IV.—Amajuba day dawns. The Secretary accompanies the Prince and Princess to Krugersdorp, where, from the base of the Monument of Independence, the President makes a great proclamation. The Convention of London is abrogated, the absolute independence of the South African Republic is declared; the President unfurls a Union Jack and rends it to pieces. So the storm bursts!

CHAPTERS V. AND VI.—On the following day Major-General Carrington learns at Buluwayo that all the wires have been cut between Rhodesia and the south and east. He concludes that this is due to Boer hostility, and prepares to meet it. Meanwhile a powerful British squadron appears unexpectedly in Delagoa Bay, and Lieutenant Ferris is sent ashore to take possession of the telegraph station.

CHAPTERS VII. AND VIII.—A Russian squadron is in the Bay at the same time. The flagship *Navarin* fires on the British destroyer *Thrasher*. Admiral Dale takes this as an act of war. There is a battle and the Russian squadron is defeated and captured. Michael Ostroff seeks to escape in the *Sokol*. He is taken prisoner, and important dispatches are found in his possession. Admiral Dale calls a council of war.

CHAPTERS IX. AND X.—General Carrington's campaign in the Matoppo Hills ends in the defeat of the rebels, the remnant of whom take refuge in a kopje, which is surrounded. A Rhodesian trooper and a private of Lancers capture a Boer disguised as a Kaffir, and take him into camp.

CHAPTERS XI. AND XII.—The Boer-Kaffir tells General Carrington that the Dutch have risen against British rule all over South Africa. The Matabele surrender, and give up the disguised Boers among them. These are shot. As the force moves southward the scouts are met by a girl, who tells them that the Boers have invaded Rhodesia and are marching on Buluwayo. Meanwhile, Admiral Dale informs the captains of the squadron in Delagoa Bay that no help can be expected from home, and that he intends to take absolute command of the coast.

CHAPTER XIII.

CAPTAIN BRYAN'S COMMISSION.

THE trooper into whose arms the fainting girl had fallen was an old grizzled Scotchman named Alan Macpherson. He had been turned out into the world some five-and-twenty years before, by the death of a dearly loved wife and an only child, who had died of scarlet fever within a few hours of each other. This had severed all the home ties he had, and made him a wanderer over the face of the earth, and mostly through the wild places thereof.

Though he was only a year or so on either side of sixty, and probably on the wrong side of it, he had as keen an eye and as steady a hand as could be found in Rhodesia, and there were not many men in the whole force under General Carrington's command that would have been very keen on shooting against him at long range for level money at a standing or moving target with anything but a Lee-Metford—which he was wont to designate with considerable scorn in his voice as an "unsopheesticated combination of cartridge-box and quick-firing gun that always jammed when a man was in a hot corner."

He gathered the girl up in his arms as tenderly and as deftly as though she had been his own daughter, and then he looked up at his captain and said as quietly as though nothing out of the common had happened:

"Aye, and it's a braw lassie she'll be when she's had a decent bit of caring for, but I'm speerin' we'd best get her back to the column as soon as maybe."

"Well, Mac, I don't think anybody's better qualified to take her than you are, judging by the nice, fatherly way you've got hold of her," said Captain Coope. "Come along, men. Right about. This isn't the sort of news that will stand much keeping; but perhaps you had better give her a taste of this first. Robertson, you take her horse."

As he spoke the captain of the scouts pulled his flask out of the sling and poured a few spoonfuls of brandy and water—which was rather a precious fluid in those days in Matabeleland—into the cup and handed it to Macpherson.

He gathered the girl in his arms.

"That's just what she'll be wanting to keep her going till we meet the ambulance, and Nurse Isabel can put her to bed comfortably for an hour or two."

He took the cup and put it to the girl's white drawn lips as tenderly as any woman could have done, just holding her head so that it trickled very slowly into her mouth. She gave a little cough and then a gasp or two,

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opened her eyes wearily, and then, murmuring a few half-articulated words, she shut her eyes again and half turned her head in the hollow of his arm like a child going to sleep.

"That's good now," said the old scout, sitting back in the saddle and arranging her more comfortably. "She's come out of the faint and gone to sleep, and a nice gentle tripple* back to the column will only rock her off sounder."

He let the bridle fall on the neck of his horse—a somewhat sorry-looking structure of bony angles and tight-drawn skin, but for all that one of the easiest goers and best stayers in the country—and sitting well back in the saddle and guiding "old Jeppe"—for such was the name of the Rhodesian Rosinante—with his knees, he followed Captain Coope, who was already cantering away up the road.

The other five members of the scouting party had been ordered to spread themselves out on both sides of the road and to keep a bright look out for Boer scouts or native spies, and to shoot on sight anyone, white or black, who was not coming openly and honestly along the road.

Half-an-hour later they met the advanced guard, which they passed through, followed by the curious glances of every man in it, but giving no further explanation than "Bad news from down yonder. Keep your eyes open and your guns ready," which Scout Macpherson vouchsafed in reply to a score of queries which assailed him as he rode through.

When the main column was reached the old scout took his charge straight to the ambulance corps, and handed her over to the care of the chief of the little band of heroic women who had followed the fortunes of the column, as they had done those of many others during the war through all manner of difficulties and dangers for the sake of doing the best and holiest work that women's hands can find to do.

Captain Coope, meanwhile, went straight to the General and told him the news. Sir Frederick heard it in silence, a silence which he did not break for some moments after the Captain had finished his report. It was one of those occasions upon which a man who is really qualified to command only takes counsel with himself. The decision had to be immediate and, once taken, irrevocable, and hence it was one that only a single mind could make.

Then he looked up and said:

"Well, that's not very good news, but it's only what we expected, and it's better to hear it now than later. Go and find Captain Norman Bryan and send him to me at once, then go to Nurse Isabel and ask her to do all she can to bring the young lady round, if it's only for a few minutes, and let me know when I can have a talk with her. You say she rode across country from Puri?"

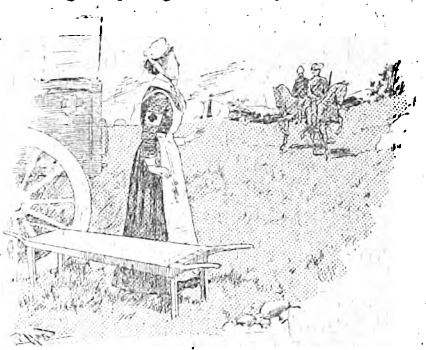
"Yes, General."

"Well, I suppose she'll be able to show us the short cut; at least I hope so, or we shall be in a bit of a fix. Well, send Captain Bryan to me as soon as you can find him."

The captain of the scouts saluted and rode away, and presently a well-knit, handsome young fellow, with a face bronzed by many an ardent sun, and sitting his horse with the easy grace of a man who spends more time in the saddle than out of it, cantered up and saluted at a respectful distance. The General quickened his horse up and turned out of the line of march on to a stretch of level grassland beside the road, beckoning to the officer to follow him. When they were alone together he slackened his pace to a walk and said:

"Captain Bryan, I am going to give you a difficult piece of work to do, and if you hadn't served with Gibb in the Soudanese Legion I shouldn't give it to you at all. I have just received news, in a rather curious way, but from quite a reliable source, that the Boers have crossed the border, taken Tuli, and invested Puri, and also that they've sent a detachment out to hold the kopjes between the Sigabi Drift and Selindila, and are lying in wait for us there, expecting us to march through and let them play the Bronkhorst Spruit game on us again.

"The news was brought by a girl, who says that she has ridden all night across country from Puri to warn us. She fainted just after she said that, and she is now in Nurse Isabel's care, being brought round, I hope. Now from what Gibb told me in the letter you brought from him you ought to know more about leading niggers and showing them how to fight than anyone else that I can spare, so I am going to ask you to take these fellows that surrendered up yonder in hand, with about a hundred good white men who understand the work, and hunt those Boers out of the kopjes. You can have a Maxim and 30,000 rounds, but the niggers must drag it, for I can t spare any animals. We shall want them all to get the other guns across to Puri. You'll probably want it, for I hear the Boers have got one. You will have to use your own discretion absolutely, and the fewer you let away the better for you and everybody concerned. Now, what do you think about it?"



Nurse Isabel met them.

"Well, sir, from what I know of the ground, the Boers will probably think that with about five hundred men they can hold the five or six miles of road that runs between the hills against the whole column, and if they have their Maxim well placed they may expect to cut us up altogether. Am I right in supposing that you intend to take the column across country to Puri?"

"Certainly I shall, if the young lady who brought the information tells me the country is practicable, as I suppose it is, if she was able to ride across in the night, for it is quite fifty miles from here."

"Very well, sir; then, granting that that can be done, I shall propose to throw out a line of scouts with a few white men to look after them between your line of march and the Bubye, so as to cut off any that the Boers may be sending out, and keep them in the dark as to your change of route. Then when you had passed they would work down through the bush to the westward of the kopjes, and I should draw all the rest off the road with the exception of four hundred or so, which I should send right down the road——"

"What to be shot down?" said the General a trifle sharply. "That's rather rough isn't it, even on niggers, and granted they have been rebels?"

"Pardon me, General," said Bryan with a smile. "I hadn't quite explained myself. What I intended to do was to send a troop of about five hundred Matabele under old Umzilizi down the road to tell the Boers that they'd eaten up the whole column in the Matoppos, and that only a few stragglers were getting back to Buluwayo.

"Meanwhile, the rest of us—I suppose we should be over a thousand strong—would work round to the eastward and southward of the kopjes, cut them off from the Drift, and when it got dark enough to spoil their shooting, go in and hunt them out with cold steel. You know the Boers hate night-fighting just as they do cold steel."

"Captain Bryan, I apologise," said the General, bluntly yet kindly. "After that I give you *carte blanche*. Do exactly as you please. If anyone can turn them out I think you can, and what's more, I believe you've struck the key-

* The South African term for pacing as distinguished from trotting.

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note of the whole war in what you have just said. 'Night attacks and cold steel.' That's it, and never use the rifle except at close quarters. The bullet and then the bayonet, that's what these beggars want, skulking behind their stones. Now, we'd better go and find Nurse Isabel and see how the patient is going on. Then you can get your men together and get to work as soon as you like."

He leant over into the waggon.

When they reached the ambulance waggon Nurse Isabel met them with the welcome information that the young lady was sleeping quietly and might be awakened for a few minutes without danger, so the waggon was stopped and the nurse raised the tent-flap and laid her hand lightly on the shoulder of the girl, who was lying on a mattress just inside.

The hardy constitution of the pioneer's daughter had carried her through the terrible experiences of the last few days and the fatigue of the long-night ride with no worse consequences than the naturally intense drowsiness that had followed her brief fainting fit, but the stoppage of the waggon, combined with a gentle shake from the nurse, roused her, and as she rose on her elbow and rubbed her eyes with the other hand, Bryan, who had dismounted, suddenly started forward past the General and said, with a quick catch in his voice:

"Good Heavens, Madge, is it *you* who brought the news? I thought you'd gone home long ago."

"Why, Norrie, are you here? Oh, I'm so glad—but it's no use—you've come too late. They're all dead, every one of them but me. Why couldn't you come before? Oh, I'm so sleepy. Where am I? Have I found the column?"

She spoke in the dreamy, half-conscious way of one who is still on the borderland between sleeping and waking, and looked about her with drowsy, inquiring eyes.

"So you're old friends, eh?" said the General kindly, putting his hand on Bryan's shoulder as he staggered back as though he had received a blow. "Well, that's bad news for you to hear on your first meeting, but it's the fortune of war, and, anyhow, if you're too late to save, you're not too late to make the blackguards pay for it."

"And I'll do it, too," said Bryan between his clenched teeth. "If any of them get out of these kopjes alive you may hang me, General."

Then he leant over into the waggon and took the girl's outstretched hand and went on:

"Yes, Madge, you've found the column. The scouts brought you in about half-an-hour ago, and this is General Carrington himself. He wants to ask you about the road you came by. Can you remember, and are you well enough to understand him?"

"Oh, yes," she said, sitting up on the mattress. "There is nothing the matter with me except that I'm very tired and very miserable. What can I tell you, sir?"

"At present all I want to know," said the General, "is whether I could take the waggons and guns to Puri by the way you came, and whether you could guide us there when you've had a good long sleep, and Nurse Isabel has done all she can to make you comfortable?"

"Yes, sir, I think you could. Of course there isn't any road, only a Kaffir track part of the way, but the bush isn't thick and the rivers are nearly dry. Of course I can show you the way, but you'll have to be very careful, for the Boers are all round the township, and they'll have their scouts out everywhere. I don't know how I got away myself, but I suppose they thought they'd killed us all."

"It's a good job for you and for us that you did," said the General. "Do you think you could give me any idea of how many there are—or, no, we had better leave that until you've had a good sleep."

"I'm afraid I can't tell you very nearly, sir," she answered, drawing her hand across her brow, "but I heard them saying at the farm that there must have been over two thousand of them from the firing that was going on all round the township. They were fighting all yesterday and the day before, but they couldn't get near the Laager because of the Maxims. Then my youngest brother rode into the farm yesterday afternoon and said that he had seen nearly a thousand of them going along the Buluwa o road. That's just before he was shot, poor fellow. He was standing beside me when the bullet came——"

"Don't distress yourself about that, my dear, now," said the General a trifle huskily. "Try and go to sleep again. I'm sorry I've had to rouse you up when you wanted sleep so badly, but you've told me all I require to know for the present. I shall come and see you again in six hours, and you, Nurse, must see that she's not disturbed on any account till then, unless, of course, you want to give her anything. But I needn't tell you what to do—you know a great deal better than I do. Now then, Bryan, say good-bye for the present and come and have another talk with me. You shall see her again before you start."

CHAPTER XIV.

The Matabele Legion.

"I don't want to pry into anything of a private nature, Bryan," said the General when they had remounted and got out of earshot of the ambulance waggon, "but I must say I should like to know how you and this young lady got to know each other. It is certainly curious that you should meet just in this way, almost at the moment you're getting ready to go and take your share in avenging the murder of her people."

"It's very simple, General, and there's nothing to conceal about it," the young man replied with a slightly deepened colour in his brown cheeks. "Her name is Margaret Morrison, in full, although she is never called anything but Madge. Her people and mine are, or rather, I am sorry to say, were, East Anglians, and her brother Fred—poor chap, he's dead now, of course—was my particular chum at the Colonial College, Hollesley Bay.

"We were learning to be farmers there, but fighting came more in my line, though Fred stuck to farming and came out here with his people as soon as he'd finished his course, and he's been farming and I've been fighting for the last six or seven years, and he's got a bullet into him first, poor chap, after all. It was through him that I got to know the rest of the family, and, to put it plainly, it was through Madge that I came out here when the Soudan business was over."

"Ah, I see," said the General, smiling albeit somewhat gravely. "Well, Bryan, you've got plenty of hard and risky work in front of you, like the rest of us, but, of course, that's what we came here for. Still, I like you, and from what I've seen of you so far I believe you'll do it well; and if you do you'll get on, or it won't be my fault that you don't. I hope you'll be as fortunate in war as I think you have been and will be in love. I shall make it my business to see that Miss Morrison is properly looked after until things cool down a bit, and after that I suppose you won't have any objection to taking care of her. No, don't trouble about any thanks just now. You'll have to earn her before you get her, I expect, and now I'll tell you how I am going to put you in the way of doing it."

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It was hardly what could have been called a lovers' interview

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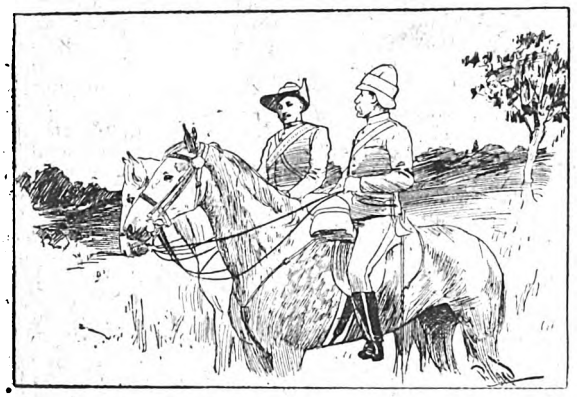
Captain Norman Bryan felt that something good was coming, and for the moment the sadness which had overwhelmed him on hearing the awful fate that had befallen his sweetheart's family gave way to the pleasurable anticipation which the General's words had inspired him with both as a lover and a soldier. He pulled himself up straighter than ever in the saddle and looked at Sir Frederick with a bright light kindling in his grey-blue eyes.

"You know," the General went on, "there is a good deal of sentimental nonsense talked about white people employing niggers, or other coloured people, to fight against other whites, but personally I can't see where it comes in. If we



You'll take brevet rank as major from to-day.

were to fight Russia, for instance, in Asia we should make plenty of use of the Sikhs and the Gourkhas, and that would be taken as a matter of course, and so I don't see why we shouldn't turn the fighting qualities of these Matabeles to advantage, especially considering how enormously we seem to be outnumbered.

"Now your experience under Gibb with the Soudanese Legion should make you just the man to manage these fellows, and so I am going to give you command of them and the troopers I have attached to them. You'll take brevet rank as Major from to-day and full rank when we get to Buluwayo, if ever we do. I shall hold you responsible for their drill and efficiency, and of course you'll have full power to lick them into shape as you think fit. There is no reason why you shouldn't do as well with them in this war as Gibb did with the Legion in the Soudan. Now how does that strike you?"

"It is the very thing of all others, General, that I should have wished for, and I'm sure I needn't tell you how grateful I am to you; but I hope to show you before long. Now that these fellows have had a good licking and know their master, they'll be as loyal as any of us, and it'll be my fault if they don't make themselves a terror to these Dutchmen before long."

"That's just what I think and hope. If ever a man had good reasons for hard fighting you have," said the General warmly, "and I expect the Boers will love you about as much as they love me before they are many weeks older. By-the-way, I've heard that you're a bit of an inventive genius. Is that so?"

"I'm afraid I can't answer for the 'genius' part of it, Sir Frederick," the newly-made Major replied modestly enough and yet with a ring of pleasure in his voice; "but I have thought out one or two little things that might be useful in tackling these Dutchmen, and, of course, I shall be only too pleased to lay them before you when you have time to consider them. Meanwhile——"

"Yes," interrupted the General, looking sharply round at him; "have you got a rod in pickle for these gentry down among the kopjes?"

"I think so, Sir Frederick," was the quiet answer, "but, of course, it's only in the experimental stage yet. Still, if you could let me have a couple of dozen rockets, and twice as many four-ounce charges of dynamite, I think I may be able to make things rather uncomfortable for them."

"Humph! Rockets and dynamite! That's rather a curious mixture," said the General. "However, I've no doubt you know what you're talking about, and I think I've an idea what you are driving at. Take what you want. I'll tell the quartermaster to supply you. Now, about men. Are there any that you'd particularly like to take with you? I know a man can always work better with men that he chooses himself, and this business that you're going on is too important not to be done well. You are going to strike the first blow, so far as we're concerned, and it must be a staggerer."

Major Bryan was silent for a moment or two, and then he said:

"That's very kind of you, General. There are one or two that I should like to take with me. There's old Macpherson of the Scouts for one. He is just the sort of man I want. Then there are those two Cockneys, Dempsey and Hinton, in the 'K' troop. They're both capital shots, and as sharp as needles. I suppose it wouldn't be possible for me to have Anson of the Lancers?"

"Oh, yes," said the General. "I'll speak to Colonel Francis about that. You can take him as your orderly. Anyone else?"

"Well, I'm afraid you'll think me greedy, but I should like to have Jackson Bethell, that big Yankee in the Rhodesian Horse, with me, though perhaps it's asking too much to want the best shot in the Column—except yourself, General."

"Don't try to be too polite, Bryan," laughed Sir Frederick. "I know Bethell very well, and he can give me a hundred yards and a beating any time, and I'm not sure that you couldn't do the same. However, you may have him for the present, for you'll want some good shots. Is that all?"

"That's all, thank you, General, and about enough too, I should think. If I don't get through all right, it won't be for want of means."

"Very well then, and now I'll halt the column for breakfast and get your orders out. When you've fed, you can set to and get things in order. We shan't move again for a few hours for I want the men to have a good rest, and the animals to get a good feed, because we shall have to march all night to-night and so will you, and we may as well do it here where we've got the water. If anything else strikes you let me know at once. We shall move again about three o'clock."

"Very well, sir, everything shall be ready by then as far as I'm concerned," replied Major Bryan as he saluted, and rode off to begin his new duties forthwith.

His feelings were a curious mixture of sorrow and pleasure, combined with something very like exultation. He knew that the chance of his life had come—the chance to make a reputation and a name in a line of work in which he would have no rival. More than that, too, he would win an honest and legitimate revenge—vengeance for the awful calamity that had befallen the girl he would willingly have risked his life to save from the slightest sorrow—and, more than that, the opportunity would soon come for him to wipe out some of the old grudges that every Englishman worthy of the name could not but have in his heart against the Boers, until the long-standing scores that dated from Bronkhurst Spruit and Amajuba Hill had been paid up in full with due interest.

He felt that it might well fall to him to take a good share in proving to the arrogant and insolent Dutchmen that there were other colours on the English flag than white, and that they were not as invincible, even behind their

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favourite rock-fortresses, as they thought themselves at Lang's Nek and Doornkop.

He was not only an intrepid soldier and a man of ready decision and resource, he was also, as the General had said, a bit of an inventive genius. He had studied the Boer methods of warfare for years, and had thought out not a few devices which he would soon have the best of chances for putting into practice, as he hoped, at their expense.

Singularly enough, too, the formation of a Matabele Legion on the lines of the Soudanese Legion had been in his mind ever since he had first seen their excellent fighting qualities, and recognised how useful and powerful an arm they might become if properly led by British officers, and now here he was just about to take command of them. Certainly it seemed that the ball was at his feet, and it was within the bounds of possibility that the end of the war might see him hailed as one of the saviours of the sorely threatened British Empire in Africa.

There is little need to say that he lost no time in making the necessary preparations for entering upon his new command. He reported himself to Colonel Beale, who until his conversation with the General had been his commanding officer, and was heartily congratulated when he told him the story of his promotion, for he was one of the most popular men in the column.

When Troopers Dempsey and Hinton, whose flesh wound was now healing fast, and Private Anson were informed of their good fortune they congratulated each other with a wealth of expression thoroughly characteristic of the city of their origin, and anything but complimentary or encouraging to those whom they were presently to meet in battle, and Trooper Hinton swore with eloquent profuseness that he hoped he might leave the world with half a hundredweight of lead in his body if he didn't win the stripe that had been given to his two chums for their little adventure with the Kaffir-Dutchman.

Sergeant Alan Macpherson of the Scouts took the news more quietly, but with no less satisfaction, and Corporal Jackson P. Bethell of the Rhodesian Horse concluded that it was "just about the best piece of news he'd heard since he'd left God's country on the other side," and modestly informed all and sundry who cared to listen that "those darned white niggers down yonder wanted a few lessons in tall shooting, and it wouldn't be long before he'd be around to instruct them."

He was a typical New Englander, tall, and somewhat lank, but hard as a nail, and a good deal braver than the so-called king of beasts, for whom, by-the-way, he had a sincere and well-founded contempt, as the following well-authenticated anecdote will show.

He was an ardent snap-shooter—in fact there was only one thing he liked using better than his camera, and that was his rifle—and once when he was out on a hunt in the Mazoe country he put a bullet into a lion at about four hundred yards, reloaded his rifle, set his shutter, and calmly took a snap-shot of the wounded beast as it was coming towards him. Then he put the camera down, picked up his rifle, and shot the lion dead when it was within thirty yards of him.

It was true that no one saw him do it, but there was the photograph, and Jackson P. Bethell was not the sort of man that anyone would light-heartedly call a liar, at least not while he was within hearing.

The time occupied by the halt was naturally a pretty busy one for Major Norman Bryan, but when the bugles sounded at half-past two he had got everything in readiness for his night's adventure.

Shortly before the column moved, Nurse Isabel relieved his very natural anxiety by sending him a message to say that Miss Morrison was awake and ready to see him when he could find time—which happened the instant that he received the message.

It was hardly what could have been called a lovers' interview, though in one sense it was infinitely more tender than such meetings commonly are, standing as they did in the shadow of a terrible sorrow, and at the beginning of a time of constant peril for one, and it might be for both; for none knew better than Madge Morrison, with her six years of pioneer life, that her lover was entering upon a much more serious business than kaffir fighting.

He was going to meet enemies who again and again had proved themselves practically invincible in their own kind of warfare. She knew that although the so-called infallible aim of the Boers had been greatly overrated, yet, taking them as a fighting force, they were infinitely superior in marksmanship to any other people in the world—and who could tell when or where a well directed bullet from behind a stone might end at once the love-dream of her own girlhood and all the hopes and projects of his opening manhood?

He was heartily congratulated when he told of his promotion.

There was not much time for lovers' dalliance between them, for the sterner work in hand had to be begun forthwith; but in such moments as those much may be said in few words, and for Norman Bryan everything was said between their last kiss and their last hand-pressure in one little sentence.

"Good-bye, dearie; we shall meet at Puri or not at all; but if we do you'll know that the Dutchmen have paid life for life and a good deal more for what they did at the farm."

Within an hour the two forces had parted. The main column under General Carrington struck north-westward up the valley of the Umzingwani to make its way through the bush country in two detachments to the north and south of Puri, flanked to the southward by a long chain of native scouts, to cut off any wandering Boers that might be inclined to spy upon their movements, while the Matabele Legion, divided into squads of a hundred natives and half-a-dozen white troopers, disappeared from the road and vanished into the bush country on both sides, leaving Umzilizi to march with his three hundred men openly into the heart of the Boer stronghold among the kopjes, to tell their tale of the eating up of the white army under the Mighty Lion.

To make their story look more plausible, they had been given a Maxim—the lock of which was safe in Major Bryan's pocket—and this they dragged gaily along the road, rehearsing the story of its alleged capture, with which their wary old leader proposed to entertain the Boers, together with many other romances concerning the possible prisoners and loot that were coming on behind them to be shared with the good friends who had taught them how to overcome their enemies.

As it was little more than a dozen miles from where the column separated to where the kopjes began, and as a good three hours of daylight still remained, there was ample time for Major Bryan's preliminary arrangements to be thoroughly carried out, and the result was that, through good luck and good management, the sun had hardly set when every squad had got into position round the kopjes without having seen or been seen by a single Boer.

(To be continued.)

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of Allen Upward's "Athelstone Ford" to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. Jas. G. Macpherson, Milton Road, Portobello, N.B. Attempts for this week's prize may deal with ANY SUBJECT and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, April 2nd. Post-cards only, please.

The Wrong Motive.

AN officer of a Volunteer company insisted upon the members of his company saluting him wherever they met, whether in uniform or not.

When walking along the street of the village one day he saw a private in plain clothes approaching.

Just before they reached the same point the private turned into the inn, and the officer in passing the door reached forward and tapped the man on the shoulder.

The private looked round, and gave his head a shake, saying:

"I canna; I've only three bawbees!"

J. G. M.

The Centre of Gravity.

Two urchins of about eleven and twelve years respectively were going by Chelsea Barracks, when one of them stopped in front of a very tall soldier on sentry duty. Calling to his mate, the lad said with bated breath:

"Just look at 'is feet, Bill! Ain't they a size?"

Bill, in that tone of contempt which comes of superior knowledge, replied:

"A co'rse they is! Don't yer know w'y that is?"

"No, and no more do you!"

"Yus. I does. Don't yer see, if 'is feet wasn't bloomin' yards 'is centre of graverty 'ud fall ahtside of 'em, and 'e'd overbalance hisself. It's just like that Heffel Tower what teacher was a-tellin' us abaht!"

C. R. F.

A Strategist.

ROBINSON (looking on): "Bad news from the front, Smith. British surrounded and many prisoners taken."

Smith (from interior of his fowl-run, which he is repairing): "What, more blundering stupidity? Well, upon my soul, it takes the cake! What with this idiotic War Office and the sweet simplicity of our generals, we are becoming the laughing stock of all Europe!" (savagely nails up last lath). "How the dickens any body of intelligent men with eyes in their heads can get themselves caged up in this extraordinary way beats me altogether!"

Robinson: "I say, old man, how are you going to get out of that fowl-run?"

Smith: "Eh, what? Get out? Great Scott! I haven't fenced myself right in, have I?"

D. M.

Fate was Hard.

A CHAPLAIN was paying a visit to the wounded men in a field hospital recently, when he came to a soldier who was groaning loudly.

"Come, my poor fellow," said the chaplain, "try and bear the pain like a man. It's no use kicking against fate."

"Bedad, you're roight, sorr," said the sufferer, who had been severely kicked by a transport mule, "'specially when they're the fate av an arrmy mule!"

W. B.

Sarcastic.

A TROOP of Yeomanry for the Cape were passing through a certain town on their way to drill.

Two street boys were playing in the gutter, and one of them looking up and seeing them said to his companion:

"I say, Bill, I'm goin' wif 'em to pick up some coppers."

"Pick up coppers," said Bill in surprise. "Yer can't pick up coppers when they be drilling."

"Yes, I can," said the other; "they allays want someone to 'old their 'osses when they draws swords."

W. J.

The Ears Did It.

A PARISIAN swell recently had a crayon picture of himself made, which he afterwards pretended to find fault with.

"It does not bear the slightest resemblance to me," he said, "and I will not take it."

The artist protested, but all to no avail. "All right, sir," he remarked finally, "if it don't look at all like you, of course I can't reasonably expect to get paid for it."

After the dandy had left, the painter added to the portrait a magnificent pair of ass's ears and exhibited it in a window, thus altered, to the gaze of the curious public.

It had not been long so exposed when the dandy rushed into the artist's studio in a towering rage, and finding that threats amounted to nothing, he at last offered to buy it even at a considerable advance upon the original price.

"It wasn't strange you didn't recognise your resemblance to the picture at first," said the painter, "but I knew you'd notice the likeness as soon as I added those ears."

P. T.

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It Was Thin.

Two men went to see a friend off at the station for the front.

After they had seen him depart they went into a refreshment room to have some sandwiches.

One of them, seeing the waiter cutting the ham about as thin as paper, said:

"I know a better game than that."

"What's that?" the waiter asked.

"Why, have it photographed on."

C. H.

She was Disappointed.

A lord was the guest of honour at a dinner at a private house. A little girl, the daughter of the host, eyed the guest curiously, and soon ventured to remark:

"Are you really and truly a lord?"

"Yes," he replied pleasantly, "really and truly."

"I have often thought that I should like to see a lord," she went on, "and—and——"

"And now you are satisfied at last," he interrupted, laughingly.

"N-no," replied the truthful little maiden; "I'm not satisfied—I'm a good deal disappointed." N. B.

Wiped Out with Blood.

A couple of good-natured Frenchmen got into a quarrel and challenged each other to fight. On the morning of the duel they and their seconds tramped through the woods to the fatal spot, when one of the duellists, the challenging party, tripped and fell.

His second helped him to his feet. "I hope you are not hurt?" said the other duellist.

"I'm not much hurt; I only bumped my nose on the ground."

"Does it bleed?"

"Yes, a little."

"Heaven be praised! Blood flows, and my honour is vindicated. Give me your hand, old boy." H. E.

It Had to be Done.

When Private Cotter had been a few days at drill as a recruit, the sergeant in charge of the squad had reason one morning to reprimand him for moving in the ranks.

"Put your hands down," he cried, "and keep them to your sides."

Cotter did so, but soon, forgetting the order, was again checked for unsteadiness.

"You must not move, sir, or lift a finger while at drill. If I have occasion to warn you again I'll cram you into the mill."

A sort of hornet now perched on Cotter's nose, which, in the course of its peregrinations, performed a variety of evolutions that made the recruit uneasy. With the persecution of the little pest he bore up manfully, till his patience at last was exhausted; and, not daring to move, rebuked as he had been for unsteadiness, he announced the inconvenience to the sergeant.

"Silence," interrupted the sergeant, losing temper, and shaking his cane; "you must neither speak nor move in the ranks. Do it but once again, and I'll take means to cure you."

"If I'm not to move or speak," roared Cotter, angrily, "come yourself, then, and knock this blessed fly off my nose." W. M. A.

Wellington on the Morning of the Battle of Salamanca.

When Sir John Steel, the sculptor, had the "Iron Duke" sitting for a statue, he tried, so it is recorded, to induce him to look warlike. All his efforts were in vain, however, for Wellington seemed, judging by his face, never to have heard of Waterloo or Talavera.

At last, Sir John lost his patience.

"As I am going to make this statue of your Grace," he exclaimed, "can you tell me what you were doing before, say, the Battle of Salamanca?

"Were you not galloping about the field, cheering on your men to deeds of valour by words and actions?"

"Bah!" said the Duke in evident scorn; "if you really want to model me as I was on the morning of Salamanca, then do me crawling along a ditch on my stomach with a telescope in my hand." M. E.

Beaten.

An army officer was entertaining a party of friends to dinner, and among them was a civilian who was an entertaining story-teller, but very reckless in his statements.

On one occasion he told of his being off the Cape of Good Hope in an Indiaman when a floating object was discovered, which proved to be a cask, whereon a man was seated clinging to a small staff in the bunghole. Of course he was invited to come aboard, but he refused and said:

"I'm very comfortable here. I'm bound for the Cape. Can I take letters there for you?"

Amid the silence which followed this incredible yarn a grey-headed colonel arose and said gravely:

"For years I have been trying to find someone belonging to that ship to return thanks for the kindness shown me on that occasion. At last I am enabled to do so. Sir, I was the man on that cask!" W. E. T.

Why He Rose Hurriedly.

At an entertainment in Dublin a thought-reader boasted that he could find a marked pin hid by one of the audience.

Several of them came forward, among whom was a confederate.

The pin was hidden by a Trinity student in an adjoining room, in the presence of the committee, among whom was the confederate.

The student, suspecting the man from his looks, slyly took away the pin from its hiding-place.

On the return to the platform the thought-reader gazed into the hider's face, and putting his hand to his brow, was blindfolded, and led the student to the hiding-place, but, of course, could find no pin.

He returned, acknowledging his defeat, and looking daggers at the confederate.

"Now, gentlemen," said the student, "I'll undertake to say that if this 'diviner of the human mind' will do as I tell him, half the audience, without a single hint from me, will know where the pin is," and turning to the thought-reader, he said, "Sit down."

He did so. There was a yell, and, jumping up, the thought-reader hastily pulled from his coat-tails the marked pin. W. E.

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AFTER STORMBERG.

By a curious chance the following narratives have all come into my hands. I shall not attempt to explain them. If there is anything to read between the lines the reader can find it as well as I.

I.—THE STORY OF SERGT. RICHARD BRAND, 1st DEESHIRE RIFLES.

It is not for me to discuss the why and wherefore of the Stormberg disaster. Our colonel has given his account, and whatever he says, I say.

But my subsequent escape was due to a leader whose voice is silenced, and so it is left to me to tell the tale.

My individual story began with a breach of discipline, the first in my career. When the order to retreat was given my blood was up, and I would not hear it, and none of my men reminded me, but kept on blazing at the little puffs of smoke by the boulders.

These were all we could see of the Boers. The little puffs kept growing in numbers and spreading round us, and drawing nearer, and my men kept falling one by one.

"Look here, boys," I said at last, "it's one of two things: either run and take our chance, or hoist the white flag. I don't think any of us have a rag the right colour for that, eh?"

"That's so, sergeant," they said, and some of them grinned.

"Each on his own, then," I told them. "I've shown you how to tell the way by the sun. God bless you, my lads. You've done your best. Run!"

Away they went, while I sat down behind a bank for the first Boer who came along to pot me. It was no more than I deserved for disobeying orders.

I waited an hour, doing what I could for the poor chaps who were wounded. Then I saw some Boers coming with stretchers, and changed my mind. Something seemed to whisper that I had a wife and two kiddies to think of at home.

So I made off through the bush unobserved. I was half inclined to have a shot at them, but I saw that they were attending to my wounded, so I couldn't.

I kept seeing Boers searching for any Englishman who had not fled, and expected every moment that they would discover me, but they did not.

Twice some came within a few yards, but crouching down in the long grass I escaped notice. I ate a few biscuits that I had, and drank all my water. Then I got so hungry that I almost made up my mind to give myself up, when I heard a voice in my ear say sharply, "No!"

I started and looked round, for it sounded like the voice of my wife; but there was no one to be seen. However, I decided to wait till it grew dark and try my luck. The chances, I was aware, were against me, for I knew nothing of the country, though I could tell the direction in which our camp lay.

Soon after I fell asleep. We had been marching all night and were dead beat before the fight began.

I woke up thinking that someone was shaking me by the shoulder.

"It is time," the voice said—my wife's soft voice.

I jumped up, rubbing my eyes; but no one was near. However, I stretched my stiff limbs and commenced to run.

When I had taken a few steps in the direction of the camp, I seemed to feel a hand pushing me down. I cowered in the long grass, and listened intently. I heard horse-steps coming nearer and nearer, and soon a Boer patrol rode close by.

Instinctively I raised my rifle, but it seemed drawn away by unseen hands. When they were almost out of hearing I stumbled forward again, looking round every few moments for the invisible presence that had guided me and seeing nothing.

It was mere fancy I told myself. The excitement

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had upset my nerves. Yet at the foot of the hill I heard my wife tell me to make a circuit to the right, and obeyed.

Twice more she seemed to warn me to seek cover; and after each warning a party of the enemy passed by.

At last I made my way through a valley between tall hills, and the moon came out so that I could see my way; but I had to proceed with increased caution, since the enemy could now see me.

After wandering for an hour, I came to a brushwood thicket, and went carefully along a narrow track. In the gloom I was less occupied by thought of enemies and began to ponder upon my strange warnings.

My wife was dangerously ill, I knew. Could it be that I had received a message from the dead? I came to a sudden stop.

If she was gone, they might take me. What did I care? Then I heard the voice again.

"The children—our children!" it said.

I felt swiftly round me in the dark. There was nothing. I wiped the sweat from my brow and walked slowly on.

Presently the bushes grew lower and scantier, so that my head would be visible above them. The moon threw long shades that seemed full of lurking foes, and I trembled at my own shadow as it stole along.

The Boers sent out scouts every night in all directions, I knew. Would the voice warn me again? Upon the heels of the thought it sounded in my ears.

"In front! There! Hide!"

I crouched behind a bush and watched. After a time I detected two figures behind a big tree. After half-an-hour I heard them exchange a few words in hoarse, guttural tones. After another half-hour they spoke again. I grew so impatient that I thought of firing at them and taking my chance, but I was under some mysterious restraint.

After another half hour they began to walk toward me. I grasped my rifle tightly and took aim at one of them.

"Don't fire," said the voice, but I would not listen. When they were within ten yards I fired. One fell and the other disappeared in the thicket. In an instant the wood seemed alive with armed men. Half a dozen shots were fired. I could hear the bullets whistle by.

"Run!" cried the voice, and I ran, with tongues of flame darting out from every side. An unseen hand was guiding me; and at last, when I was almost exhausted, the firing ceased; but still the invisible guide urged me on. Suddenly foes appeared in front.

"Quick," cried the voice. "The left path." I ran as fast as my heavy legs would let me. I heard a shot, and I thought it was followed by a woman's scream and a fall. I could see no one. It must be fancy. So I pressed on till I came out upon an open plain. Then I reeled and fell unconscious.

When I recovered the moon was shining brightly, and there was no sign of an enemy. I rose and staggered on in the direction of the camp. Presently the sun sprang up, but I never paused, except to drink at a pool of water by the way. My heart began to drum, and my head whirled round. Then I met a mounted picket, and they carried me to the camp.

A month later I heard that my wife—dear little wife of mine!—died at the hour of my return. I listen still for her voice in my ear; but I listen in vain.

II.—THE STORY OF PAUL KRONEN, OF THE TRANSVAAL ARMY.

The night after the Lord had granted us our glorious victory at Stormberg, I was in the woods to the S.W. on the look-out for any straggling red-necks who might pass that way. I had waited for many hours when I heard shots to the north, first one, and then many.

Soon an English soldier came running, with heavy, lagging steps and laboured breath, down the path in front of me.

It may have been that I was disordered by long watching, but it seemed to me that a strange shadow ran beside him, reminding me of the red-necks who fight in petticoats, only smaller.

I rubbed my eyes and hesitated a moment. Then I saw that my duty was clear, for what availeth a shadow? And the issue of all things is surely the will of the Lord.

So I stepped out a pace or so and took steady aim.

As I was about to fire, the red-neck swerved suddenly towards a little path to the left. I covered his broad back, and, when I was quite sure of my aim, I fired.

As I pulled the trigger the shadow, which seemed to have grown into reality, sprang between us. The following instant it threw up its arms, staggered, cried with a woman's cry, and fell. The moonlight shone on its face; and it was the face of an Englishwoman, beautiful to behold. I stood turning cold like a stone, with horror at the thing that I had done.

As I gazed I saw the colour fade out of the cheeks and the lips go white. Over the heart there grew larger and larger a purple-red stain. The red-neck had left his woman and fled. Had he stayed, he might have shot me unchallenged for the deed that I had done.

Then it seemed fitting that I should go to the woman and render such help as might be. So I pushed my way through the brambles, and leapt the little ditch, and came to the place where she had fallen. And behold, there was no woman there! Nor upon the grass was there any stain of red, only the cold night dew.

Truly my sight had deceived me, as I might have known. For these red-necks, though fools, are brave. It is not within belief that one of them would leave his woman to die. Belike my senses played me false altogether, and there was no soldier at all. The Lord alone knows, who disposes all things things well!

III.—THE STORY OF EDWARD GRANT, M.R.C.S.

Every doctor has to treat cases which he cannot fully understand. Occasionally he meets one which does not even appear to admit of explanation; or at most suggests an enveloping world of mystery, from which science cannot lift the veil. The case of Mary Brand was such. Looked at professionally it was a case of valvular disease of the heart, in a severe and painful but normal form.

Her strange fancies may have been merely the delusions of a neurotic patient, suffering from a disease likely to aggravate them. But this is merely the absence of explanation after all.

Her complaint, which was of long standing, became aggravated after her husband's departure with his regiment for South Africa; and some three weeks later she commenced to suffer from the delusions. She would also fall for long periods into a sleep so heavy as almost to resemble the hypnotic trance.

At times I suspected some past history of hynotism or mesmerism; but this she denied. About five weeks

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after Sergeant Brand's departure the delusions became frequent, and took complete hold of her. She believed that she had visited her husband in her sleep, and had seen what he and his comrades were doing. She described the preparations for hostilities, and the military movements in a very realistic manner; and upon several occasions she certainly gave details which appeared to be corroborated by reports appearing later in the papers. Upon my asking her if her husband was aware of her presence she said "No." If there was an hypnotic influence at work I am clear that it was not his.

Upon the evening of December 9th, I found her heart trouble much increased, and her pulse greatly quickened. She had been to South Africa again, she said, and found that General Gatacre's army, in which Sergeant Brand was serving, was about to make a night attack upon the enemy. She was sure, though she could not tell how, that it was doomed to failure.

I administered a strong sedative to calm her, and when I paid a second visit later she had fallen into a heavy sleep.

She remained in this sleep all the next day. When she woke the morning after (the 11th) the heart trouble had further increased, and she could only speak in gasps, but she insisted on talking, and this is what she told me:

"I have saved him, doctor. Saved my dearie! Saved him! I couldn't give my life really, only the few days that I had to give. I gave them, doctor. You don't believe me, but I know it.

"They went the way I told you. You will see it all in the paper. Tramp, tramp! Rattle of guns and carriages. Sometimes dark. Sometimes moonlight. Great hills all round them. All so silent. Dick's hand on my little locket; the children's hair and mine. I was beside him all the way, but he did not know it. He wasn't afraid, doctor—not afraid, only thinking of us.

"Then it was morning. They were hungry and tired. Dragging themselves slowly along. Listless eyes. Great mountains all round them. They began climbing up one. It looked so quiet and innocent. They did not see the enemy there; but I knew! I tried to tell Dick, but he could not hear. Suddenly, out shot little tongues of fire all over the hill, and our men began to fall—the officers fastest.

"'Come round this way. Work up under the stones and bushes,' shouted my man. I was holding his hand, but he could not feel me. Then the bugles sounded the retreat, but he would not hear them—my brave man! But one by one they fell—Ah! At last he told the rest to run, and they ran. *He* did not run, but stayed to help the wounded. Then he sat down quietly to die; but I kept on whispering to him to think of us, and at last he heard. I guided him all the way. I could see them through the stones and trees. I *made* him hear me and know me, and I kept beside him through the day and through the night. But at last he grew impatient and would not stay his hand.

"'I'll mark one of them, if I die for it,' he muttered between his teeth, and shot a foe who came near. Then I cried to him to flee and he fled. I guided him for I could see them, and he could not.

"When we had nearly passed their line, however, a number of them blocked every way that we could go; but we could not stay, so I took him where they were fewest. We came to the edge of the wood. One from the trees aimed full at him. Then I seemed to call my body from this bed. I was afraid. Feel how my heart beats yet! But I stepped in the way. What did it matter? I was soon to die, anyhow. The bullet struck me near the heart and I fell. I had saved him. You do not believe me; but the mark is there."

She closed her eyes in exhaustion and said no more.

Later in the day she died. There was a curious puncture over her heart; and the newsboys were calling, "British Defeat!" in the streets outside.

Owen Oliver.

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I THREW myself into the corner of the P.L.M. train, which was due to start in two minutes, and settled myself as comfortably as I could for a journey on the Paris, Lyons, and Mediterranean Railway to Marseilles. I had had just enough of Paris for a time; orders for the specialities dealt with by the firm for which I was travelling had not come in at all well in the capital, and I was rather disgusted with fate or the dulness of trade. I had expected great things during this journey, and, had my expectations been realised, my position in the firm would no doubt have been improved.

The carriage was empty, and I was glad of it, seeing that I was not in the best of tempers. I might be able to retrieve the position at Marseilles and send home some good orders, but I was obliged to confess to myself that such a contingency was not probable. I was tired and discontented; I wanted to be alone.

I spent the next two minutes in glaring at the door; I haven't the slightest idea why I did this but possibly I thought it might deter anyone else from entering. Then I heard the cry "*En voiture!*" and heaved a sigh of relief. Thank goodness, we were off!

But I gave expression to my thanks too quickly; the train was almost on the move when the door was flung open and a young man sprang into the compartment. Then the door was slammed and we steamed out of the station.

Well, there was no help for it and, after all, I supposed the newcomer would not eat me. Provided that he did not endeavour to make me listen to some wearying talk, I need not heed his presence. With these thoughts I took up my paper and began to read, my fellow-traveller making himself cosy in the corner diagonally opposite me.

Curiosity forced me to take a sidelong glance at my companion, after a lapse of a few minutes. He had a paper in his hands, but I doubted very much whether he was reading it; and the look on his face suggested deep thought and I mentally decided that he was reflecting on some weighty matter. He was about medium height, with light hair and moustache and somewhat effeminate in appearance. There was nothing particularly attractive about him, except perhaps his eyes, which struck me as being bright and piercing.

Having taken stock of the young Frenchman—for his nationality was evident—I resumed my perusal of the newspaper, laying it down a few minutes afterwards in an attempt to get a short nap.

I do not know how long I slept; my slumber was interrupted by a more than usually severe jolt and I awoke with a start.

My first impulse was to look towards the opposite corner, where I saw my fellow traveller gazing at me with just the flicker of a smile on his lips. I suppose I ought to have looked for my bag to see that it was intact, but that did not worry me in the least, as it contained nothing but samples and some linen underclothing, neither of which seemed to me at that moment worth a thought.

I had not yet recovered my good humour.

"Monsieur has been sleeping," remarked the young man.

These were the first words he had spoken, and his voice had such a pleasant, musical ring about it that I was charmed and replied with a smile.

"Yes. I was very tired."

Then I suddenly remembered that we had both spoken English, and I asked him: "But you are French, are you not? Yet you speak English remarkably well."

"Oh, I was brought up almost entirely in England, that is the explanation."

There was a short musical laugh; clearly, he was pleased at having so nearly deceived me by his knowledge of our language.

The ice having been broken, he left his corner and took the seat directly opposite me. Some desultory remarks passed between us, and then we drifted into a lively conversation about French and English politics and forms of government. I should not like to say who brought up the subject of the overthrow of the French Republic; I only know that our conversation turned in that direction. I believe it was my companion who introduced it. Anyhow, we had a long talk about it and it gradually dawned upon me that M. Blouet—I learnt incidently that his name was Blouet—was much troubled in mind; I have a faint recollection that he seemed pre-occupied in spite of the gay tone in which he conversed, and that his eyes often wandered to the window.

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As we approached Lyons this anxiety became more evident and at last I was impelled to utter a delicate hint.

"It is true, monsieur; I am worried, I will confess it," replied M. Blouet. "You are English and I am confident that I can trust you. Let me tell you, and perhaps you may help me."

He spoke hurriedly and I became interested. His charming manner and my own resentment against things in general had brought me to that state of mind when I would have done anything that was not exactly against the laws of morality. I began to suspect complicity in some intrigue against the powers that were, and this added a palatable piquancy to the affair. I at once intimated my willingness to be of service.

"It is thus," continued the young Frenchman. "I have enemies, who wish to imprison me for purposes of their own. In this country it is so easy to fabricate a charge against any person whom you wish to keep out of the way; my enemies wish to put me aside, because that would mean great gain to them. Oh, it is too long a story to narrate entirely! And I am so worried that I should not tell it properly. It was dangerous for my liberty for me to stay in Paris, so I intended to go to London, where I have lived before and where everyone is free. Oh, it is a great country!"

He was getting excited, and by way of soothing him I remarked complacently:

"Yes, ours is a grand country to live in."

That was all I could think of, on the spur of the moment, but on looking back it seems to me that my words were calculated to make him feel more annoyed with his own land rather than produce a soothing effect.

"Yes, yes! I evaded them at Paris, but instead of going direct to London I had to make this *détour*. I am going to the south and thence into Spain and from there I shall go to London. That will throw them off the scent. But I feel that I am not quite safe; it may be that they will attempt to catch me at Lyons—I know not, but I feel it. You, monsieur, belong to a chivalrous nation; if it must be so, will you deliver a letter for me in London? By so doing, you may secure my liberation if I am arrested. If that letter falls into their hands also, then I am indeed lost and their gain will be great, great!"

I intimated with great vigour that I would do my utmost to protect him from arrest, but he smiled sadly and shook his head. It was hopeless, he assured me in voluble tones; if he had the chance, he would make a dash for liberty. I thereupon expressed in decided accents my willingness to deliver the letter.

We were now within easy distance of Lyons. Blouet took a long envelope from an inner pocket and hastily scribbled something on it with a lead pencil. I honestly believe that he did not see what he was writing, for he raised his head and looked out of the window in the middle of his scribbling. I thought that he was going to hand it to me then and there, but he mechanically replaced it in his pocket. Shortly after this the train pulled up at Lyons.

There was a wait of some minutes at the station, I knew, and in the ordinary course of things I should have made my way to the buffet; on this occasion, however, I preferred to remain in the carriage. I wished to be at hand if any attempt were made upon the person of M. Blouet. I generally carried a revolver and I was debating whether I should risk the consequences and make use of it.

The minutes went past without any intrusion and the stopping time was nearly over; I took out my watch and glanced at it, raising my face with a smile to tell my new-found friend that his fears were groundless, when I saw his face pale.

The next instant he had thrust the letter under my heavy coat, which lay on the seat beside me, and made a dash for the opposite door.

Almost at the same moment two men pulled open the door and one of them sprang in. There was an angry exclamation as he saw Blouet disappear through the opposite door; he made a dash at the fugitive, who contrived to deftly slam the door behind him, striking the man on the face and causing him to howl with pain and rage. My half-formed intention to use my revolver vanished at once, for I inwardly believed that Blouet would escape.

He had slipped through their fingers at this juncture and there was good reason to hope that even with such a short start he might elude them. Another idea flashed through my brain and I promptly resolved to act upon it; gathering up my coat with the precious letter folded inside, and seizing my bag, I left the station unnoticed—the officials were too excited over the Blouet incident to attend to their duties—and made my way into the town with the intention of stopping until the next day. But, as I passed into the street, I heard from the excited talk of several persons, that detectives where chasing a man charged with plotting against the Republic.

I was at first inclined to smile at this notion, but the more I reflected on it, the more probable it seemed, until at length, I arrived at the conviction that it was correct. Blouet's conversation pointed to it also. Here was a fine state of things; I had deliberately promised to deliver some treasonable documents! I felt that this was hardly fair to the country in which I was travelling, but—I had promised! And my spleen against the Parisian dealers who had witheld their orders egged me on and I resolved to fulfil my mission.

It was the evening of the following day when I arrived at Marseilles. My mood had entirely changed; my short stay at Lyons had been profitable—I had taken several good orders—and I felt on good terms with myself and everybody, especially myself. I wondered as I left the station whether I had been connected in the minds of the police with the conspirator, and I positively chuckled at the events of the past few hours. I was beginning to have quite a liking for the work of a conspirator.

It was too late to do business that day, so I engaged a room at a good hotel and arranged my toilet with a view to spending the evening at a music hall or theatre. I was putting the finishing touches to my hair—I am rather particular about my hair—when the door was quietly opened and a man, who I at once divined to be a police official, entered the room and shut the door behind him.

"May I ask, monsieur," I demanded in polite tones and in my best French, "why it is that I am honoured by this visit?"

"I am sorry to disturb you, monsieur," replied the visitor with equal suavity, "but you are bearer of treasonable documents entrusted to you by a person with whom you travelled from Paris to Lyons. The safety of the Republic demands that those documents should be given up to the police, and I am invested with authority to receive them. Monsieur will kindly hand them to me."

The polite manner in which he made the demand left nothing to be desired; at the same time, I knew very

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well that it was imperative. I repressed a smile of satisfaction and gravely informed him that there was some mistake. Conspiracy work was getting interesting.

"No treasonable document, that I am aware, has come into my possession. Certainly, I have no such document and therefore cannot hand it to you," I explained. This was true, though evasive.

"I am sorry that monsieur declines to relinquish the treasonable documents," said the officer bowing. "In that case I have no course to follow but to arrest monsieur and search his luggage and clothing."

I made a spirited protest, showing my passport and standing on my dignity as a British subject, threatening the French Government with all sorts of penalties for the insult and I know not what. This tirade served my purpose which was to prevent any further reference to my travelling companion; I did not wish to tell lies, and I naturally had no desire that the officer should press the matter too closely. After an animated discussion, I agreed to allow him to search my belongings and my clothing, he consenting to accept this compromise. I first turned out all my pockets and convinced him that I had nothing concealed between the cloth and the lining; then I permitted him to work his own sweet will on my travelling coat and my bag.

When he had completed his task he stood up and looked puzzled. I believe that he half regretted having agreed to the compromise. I expected that he would tell me that I had hidden the documents or made away with them, but he was very quiet and finally bowed himself out with profuse apologies. I knew what that meant; I was to be "shadowed."

Then I went out to spend the evening, but I was by this time in a rather excited condition and the "turns" at the music hall were not to my liking. I left my seat and passed into the street with the intention of sauntering about Marseilles for an hour or so and then returning to my hotel. But my adventures were not over.

I was musing on the fact that the police had coupled me with Blouet and had tracked me to Marseilles, and was wondering how it had been done and whether they had learnt anything of my movements in Lyons—although later events seemed to be against their having any knowledge on the last point—when a hand was laid on my arm and a voice said:

"I am commmissioned to ask you for the letter handed to you in the train."

Needless to say that I was startled by this intrusion upon my thoughts; however, I was not to be caught so easily as that and I replied coolly that I knew nothing of the letter in question.

The man, whose face I could not discern, hesitated for a few seconds with his hand still on my arm, and then left me abruptly.

I continued my walk, deep in thought now concerning the probable results of my work as a conspirator or as an abettor of a conspiracy. All at once a strong arm was placed round my throat and before I could cry out or make any resistance I was gagged and bound. I was carried for a short distance by my head and feet, face downwards, and any attempt to struggle would have ended in bodily injury; so I resigned myself to my fate for the time being. I was placed in a fiacre and driven I don't know where.

My captors took me to a room which was dimly lighted, unbound me and took the gag from my mouth. They lost no time in preliminaries, but came to the point at once. It amounted to this: they knew me and that I had carried off the letter given to me by Blouet; they intended to deliver that letter themselves and they must have it.

My first thought was that this was a trick on the part of the police; the officials were pretending to be the friends of Blouet in the hope of ascertaining where the letter was, but the answers I received to my indefinite questions gradually convinced me that my captors were really friends of "the cause," whatever that might be.

"Well," I said at length, "I was requested to deliver the letter and I have begun my task. The documents are not in my possession; in fact, they are probably on the other side of the Channel by this time, as I have sent them to London by a special messenger."

Despite my conviction that these men were friends of the conspirators, or the conspirators themselves, I determined to be guarded in the information I gave them.

"That is nonsense, monsieur," said one of the men abruptly. "The police are on the watch and they would stop any messenger you might send, for we know that they have traced you to this city. What have you done with the letter?"

"The police have already satisfied themselves by a visit to my hotel that I am not in possession of the documents," I returned easily. Then I gave them an account of what had happened. "I tell you that I have despatched the letter to London; it has been taken by a Government official."

They looked at each other in amazement and then poured forth a torrent of questions, to which I simply replied that the letter was on its way to London in charge of a Government official and that if any friend of the cause would call upon me at my office two days later and bring my card, I would deliver it to the bearer.

Having said which, I took out my business card, signed my name at the back and handed it to the foremost man.

It was quite half an hour before they would let me go, but I refused to tell them anything more; and I suppose that they were convinced either of my sincerity or that I had parted with the letter, for they allowed me to depart unmolested.

On reflection, it occurred to me that there were two other reasons for letting me go; the first was that I casually allowed my revolver to be seen, and the second was that they guessed that the police would shadow me and that might be awkward for them, as the police might get upon their track.

I wandered about Marseilles for half an hour before I found myself in a familiar locality from which I could direct my steps to the hotel, but at last I reached my room and murmured inward thanks that the day was over.

Two days later I was in my office. A messenger came into my room to tell me that a young lady wished to see me; her name was Legard. Surmising that this visit was connected with the mysterious letter I asked the boy to show her in and see that our conversation was not interrupted—for the room was not entirely given up to me.

The young lady entered and, after the usual greetings, she opened a purse and took from it the card I had given to the men at Marseilles. In accordance with my promise I handed the letter to her.

"I could not have delivered it," I remarked, pointing to some illegible pencil strokes on the face of the envelope,

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"as the pencil used by M. Blouet did not mark more than a few lines. It is impossible to read either the name or the address. But how is it that *you* are a conspirator?"

"First tell me, sir, how you got the letter to London." She had been been speaking French, but now she lapsed into English. "You said that it was carried by a Government official—what does that mean?"

"Simply this," I replied. "I went direct from the railway station at Lyons to a shop where I could buy an envelope of suitable size; into that I put your letter and addressed it to a friend at Canterbury. A brief note requested him to readdress the inner packet to me at this office. Was it not perfectly true, therefore, that the important documents which the French Government was so anxious to seize were being conveyed to their destination under the care of their own officials?"

A rippling peal of laughter made me start to my feet and look fixedly at the young lady. The laugh was familiar; could it be that——

"Yes," the young lady said, divining my thoughts. "I am Blouet—masculine attire was my disguise. I had to sacrifice my hair—my lovely hair—and I must wear false locks until it grows again.

"How did we trace you? Oh that was easy; our organisation is very complete. But alas! The plot has been partly discovered and the best thing to be done with these documents is to destroy them." So saying, she walked to the fireplace and threw the unopened letters which had caused so much trouble, into the flames.

I asked her if she had much difficulty in eluding her pursuers.

"Not much," she replied "but I had to remain in hiding for several hours. When I was able to venture out I contrived to communicate to friends what had happened, with the result that you were siezed at Marseilles. I managed to get another disguise and escape to London; it was risky, but it was more risky to remain in France."

All the time she had been speaking I had examined her features narrowly and taken careful note of every inflection of the voice. I had no doubt whatever, that she was the young man with whom I had travelled from Paris to Lyons.

Did I marry her? Well, no. I didn't. I admit freely that I felt very much inclined to make her an offer, but it struck me that such a strong-minded young lady would want to rule things entirely and absolutely, and I prefer to do the ruling myself. She is now quite a *grande dame* in Paris, and if the police know of her identity, they do not trouble her. Geo. Day.

"Your son has gone out, hasn't he, Jones?"

"Yes, miss. I see from the newspaper his regiment is in Khaki, but I can't find it on the map. Maybe you've heard tell of the place?"

"Did you take Johnny to school, Jeremiah?" asked Mrs. Boggs of her husband.

"I did," said he. "An excellent school it is, Matilda. The scholars are models of deportment, the curriculum is first-class, and the master a man of ability—at least, that is the way he struck me."

"You ought to have stayed about an hour," said Johnny, "and seen how he struck me."

£250

WILL BE GIVEN TO THE READER OF "SHORT STORIES" FROM WHOM WE RECEIVE A COUPON BEARING THE EXACT DAY UPON WHICH THE

British Flag will be Officially Hoisted in Pretoria.

ALL YOU HAVE TO DO.

Fill in the coupon below.

Send it in to us as soon as you like.

Send as many coupons as you like.

If two competitors name the exact day the money will go to the one who gives the correct hour of that day. If two or more give the correct day and hour the £250 in full will go to him whose coupon we received bearing the earliest date of sending in. Pretoria time, which is about an hour and three quarters in advance of English time, must be stated.

The Editor's decision must be final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding.

The Editor reserves the right to close this competition at a day's notice.

Address all envelopes to "War Editor," Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Pretoria Coupon, S.S. *March 31, 1900.*

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Day..... *Hour*.....

(Pretoria Time.)

We shall take it that competitors mean the year 1900 unless they state otherwise.

This notice and coupon also appears every week in the ILLUSTRATED WAR NEWS, HOME NOTES, SUNDAY READER, PEARSON'S WEEKLY, and the BIG BUDGET.

Readers of SHORT STORIES may enter with this Coupon.

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All Sufferers from

Asthma, CHRONIC BRONCHITIS, Chest Diseases, Shortness of Breath, *BLOOD-SPITTING, &c.,*

will receive, post free, **FREE OF CHARGE,** particulars of

An ABSOLUTE LASTING CURE

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PAUL WEIDHAAS, Pulmonary Institute

16 (T.A.) BUCKINGHAM ROAD, BRIGHTON.

Describe your disease, and mention if you suffer from **cold feet.** NO INTERFERENCE WITH OCCUPATION.

Read the following Testimonial (one of scores received.):

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(17 YEARS' STANDING) CURED.

I have suffered from violent attacks of Asthma and Bronchitis, with suffocating cough and much expectoration of blood and phlegm, and noise in the chest; and at times my breathing being so bad that I could not walk. I could get no rest at night, my hands and feet being always cold. Now, having been under your treatment, I am much better, both in breathing and coughing. I have very little expectoration. I can walk and rest better, and have no suffocating feelings. My hands and feet are never cold now. I am feeling better now than I ever did. I express my grateful thanks to you for the kind interest you have taken in me.—Miss A. M. (M. 3306), Thorley.

(Address on application.)

Mr. WEIDHAAS is prepared to pay

£1,000

to any Charitable Institution if the above is not a genuine extract from the patients' own letter. The original may be seen at this Institute by any bona-fide inquirer.

CURABLE

"WORTH A GUINEA A BOX."

BEECHAM'S PILLS

FOR ALL

BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS,

Sick Headache, Constipation, Wind and Pains in Stomach, Impaired Digestion, Disordered Liver, and Female Ailments.

SALE OVER SIX MILLION BOXES YEARLY.

In Boxes, 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.

Prepared only by the Proprietor,

THOMAS BEECHAM, St. Helens, Lancashire.

Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine Dealers everywhere.

DRUNKENNESS

CURED. This can be done with or without patient's knowledge. Send me a stamp and I will tell you how. (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Mrs. C. H. (Room 8), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

NOSE

MACHINES. LEES RAY, S. S. Dept., South Castle St. Liverpool, is a specialist on Ugly and Red Noses. Send stamp for particulars of his patent scientific Nose Improvers. Red Nose Cure, medically approved, **3/9.** Outstanding Ear Machines, **11/6.**

VARICOCELE.

Men who are weak and suffering from nervous exhaustion, loss of vigour, Varicocele, &c., can be successfully and permanently cured without operation or detention from business by THE DR. COLLINS most improved and rational method medical science has ever yet produced.

Particulars and proofs of successful cures sent free on receipt of address.

THE COLLINS REMEDY CO.,
Gothic House, 9 Erskine Street, Liverpool

Neuralgia Positively Cured!

Free Test Offered.

The annexed cut presents in the prominent white lines the nerves most liable to attacks of Neuralgia. Sufferers will know only too well the pain tracks, and will be glad to know of a Simple and Sure Remedy. The proprietors will send Free two sample Zox Powders to any reader of *Short Stories* sending stamped envelope to ZOX CO., 11 HATTON GARDEN, LONDON, E.C.

TOO STOUT.

I was for years; by chance I came across a simple home remedy that reduced me from 17st. to 10st. 12lbs., and I will willingly send particulars **free** to any sufferer enclosing stamp. Mrs. L. E. FELL, 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

JUNO CYCLES FOR LADIES AND GENTS.

FREE OR FIXED WHEELS.

LISTS POST FREE

THE VERY BEST.
Carriage Paid.
Discount for Cash.

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£10	16/8
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Road Racer ... £10 0s. 16s. 8d. Monthly. Write for New Light Roadster, £10 10s. 17s. 6d. Monthly. Season's List of JUNO Cycles and Accessories, over 100 pages, sent post free. Scorcher Brake, 1/-; Standard Cyclometer, 10,000 miles, 1/10

METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS CO. Ltd.
Juno Cycle School & Works, 75, 76, Bishopsgate Street, Without, E.C., and Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

A SUM of from 12s. to 25s. per week can be earned in spare hours or evenings by either sex everywhere.—Send addressed envelope for particulars to Box 24, Eclipse Works, 89 Aldersgate Street, E.C.

A MAGNIFICENT COMPLEXION GUARANTEED

By the free use of LILLIE POWDER. It nourishes, heals, soothes, and brings Health and Beauty.

Prepared from the original recipe invented by Mrs. Langtry, under the strict supervision of Her Majesty's Perruquier, Mr. W. Clarkson.

Order it of your Chemist and refuse all substitutes, as they may be injurious.

Three Tints: Blanche Naturelle, and Rachel.
Of all Chemists, Hairdressers, Stores, &c.

THE LILLIE SYNDICATE,
Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

HAIR DESTROYED.

Send me an envelope (stamped and addressed) and I will tell you how to remove all superfluous hair **free of charge.** (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Miss E. V. (Room 3), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

DEVONSHIRE CREAM

(Really Genuine.) In Patent Air-tight Tins. ½-lb., **1/4**; 1-lb., **2/4**; 2-lb., **4/-**, including Tin and Postage.

Mrs. CONYERS, Morchard Bishop, DEVON.

WHY BE FAT?

When a lady, who has discovered a simple means of Self-Cure will be happy to send particulars of same to any sufferer from this distressing complaint. Free on receipt of stamped addressed envelope. ADDRESS:

Mrs. TREVOR WELLS,
63 *HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON, W.C.*

STAMP PORTRAITS.

These portraits are the exact size of the ordinary postage stamp, and are also gummed and perforated. **50 for 2/6, 100 for 4/-** Send cabinet photo and P.O. to: **The Permanent Photo Co., Ealing, London.** Agents Wanted. Please mention paper.

ROSY CHEEKS

and a lovely complexion, skin clear as Alabaster, produced by one box of **Dr. LENNOX'S Harmless Arsenic Wafers,** the only cure for Pimples, Blackheads, Sallow or Greasy Skins, no matter how bad. Price per box, privately packed with Medical and Analytical Reports by Dr. Griffiths and Granville Sharpe, F.C.S., 2/6 post free. H. LENNOX, 21 Electric Avenue, Brixton, London. Absolutely harmless to the most delicate. Thousands of testimonials.

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The Brain Gymnasium.

In these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, Short Stories, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by Monday, April 9nd, 1900.

No. 76.

Group together the sixteen asterisks shown below so that exactly six squares of equal size are formed by drawing lines from one asterisk to another.

* * * * * * * *

* * * * * * * *

No. 77.

LID—MOP—ONE—STY—LESS—EAR—CARS—LEG—NOT—FANG—SHE—OLD—EAT.

Take two consecutive letters from each of the above words, and arrange the letters so that a well-known proverb can be read.

No. 78.

I A I A E E O U A O O E A O E E E E A I O E E O U A I A E E. O E I O E E E.

The above are the vowels, in the correct order, of a verse from a very famous British naval ballad.

No. 79.

I am a word of two syllables. By changing the third letter of my first, you leave me without my head. Should you wish to restore it, simply deprive me of my second. What word am I?

No. 80.

A schoolmaster had a dozen boys standing in front of his desk. He asked the first boy a question, and, receiving a wrong answer, sent him to the bottom of the row. The second boy gave the right answer, and was told to go to the top seat. The third boy in turn was sent to the bottom of the row, and the fourth boy to the second seat, and so on. If the lads had been numbered from one to twelve, how must they have stood so that they resumed their seats in numerical order?

No. 81.

Form two word squares, the connecting word of which is the name of a town in the south of England. Only the following consonants are to be used:

B D D M N N N N N R S S S S S T T W W.

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Nos. 52 to 57.

In the above competition forty-two competitors were absolutely correct. We have divided the prize, and are forwarding a shilling postal order to each of the following:

W. T. Cook, Homerton; E. Hutchings, High Holborn; E. Tempest, Clapton; D. Finigan, Clapton; H. B. Thompson, Bracknell, Berks; E. H. Roberton, Newcastle-on-Tyne; J. Kean, Edinburgh; A. F. Smith, Hornsey; Miss A. Wallis, High Wycombe; J. E. M. Hall, Brockley; Charles Harwood, Forest Hill; W. Gyde, Warley; I. M. Child, Derby; T. Josiah, Paddington; James Hardy, St. Pancras Square, N.W.; W. Thomas, Kentish Town; E. Coombs, Wilberforce Road, N.; James Matthews, Chiswick; Miss Fazzi, Newcastle-on-Tyne; Mrs. Roberton, Newcastle-on-Tyne; Mrs. E. Davis, Barnstaple; M. W. Daws, Hull; Miss E. Roberton, Newcastle-on-Tyne; M. E. Ridge, Tulse Hill; M. C. Rimmer, Streatham; W. J. Barter, Cork; F. Bessant, Falmouth; A. Plentyn, Llangollen; W. J. Griffiths, Oswestry; Mrs. A. Palmer, Morecambe; D. P. Jones, Brixton; C. F. Bigger, Morecambe; S. J. Brewer, Canonbury; A. W. Chapman, Wimbledon; H. Barnes, Camberwell; C. H. Poynter, Southampton; J. W. Johnson, Crewe; W. C. Lee, Stockport; H. Quinton, Southampton; J. H. Cockerill, Kingsland Road, N.; Miss E. Chapman, Wimbledon, S.W.; S. D. Cray, Upper Holloway, N.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES

Appearing in No. 584, March 10th.

No. 58. TAR—TAR—Y.

No. 59. DROUGHT—TROUGH—ROUGH—OUGHT.

No. 60. HORATIUS:
HO—LLAND; IT—ALY; P—AR—AGUAY; U—L—S—TER.

No. 61. SIX—SIXTY—SILLY.

No. 62.

PENS
EVIL
NINA
SLAVERY
EMEU
REEL
YULE

No. 63.

2 3 4 3 2
3 5 3
4 5 6 5 4
3 5 3
2 3 4 3 2

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HEADACHE and NEURALGIA IMMEDIATELY,

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To ANYONE HAVING THE LEAST DIFFICULTY, it will be sent post free for 12 Stamps by "KAPUTINE Ltd.," Huddersfield; or, on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope, A. M. Kaputine, Huddersfield, you will receive a free sample.

The fact that "KAPUTINE" is recommended by many leading Medical Men, and is used in National Hospitals and Infirmaries proves that it is THE, THE recognised SAFE REMEDY FOR HEADACHES.

Refuse Substitutes and demand "KAPUTINE," the Safe Remedy. There is no substitute "LIKE IT"; nothing "AS GOOD"; nothing "SIMILAR."

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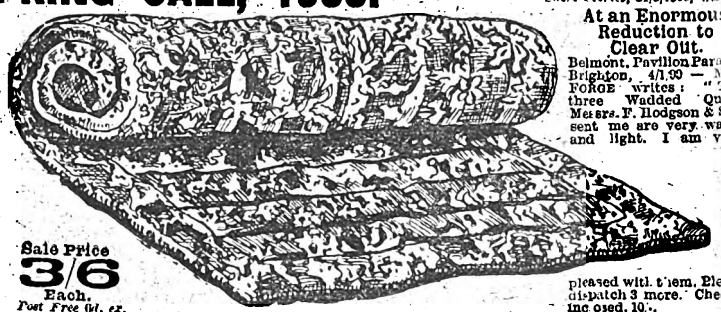
GIGANTIC SPRING SALE, 1900.

ILLUSTRATED BARGAIN CATALOGUES OF CARPETS, HEARTHRUGS, TABLE LINEN, CURTAINS, etc. POST FREE, if mentioning *Short Stories*, 31/3/1900, when writing.

A Stock of 10,000 PATENT WADDED QUILTS, TORALIUMS, OR BED COVERS (as Illustration).

Covered with Oriental Reversible Soft Sateen with double border. Size 54in. by 60in. These Quilts are offered below anything in the Wholesale Trade, and cause the greatest consternation to the buyer, wondering how they can be produced for the money.

SPECIAL OFFER. Three Quilts for 10/-, or Six for 19/6, or Twelve for 38/-



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Belmont, Pavilion Parade, Brighton, 4/1/00 — Mrs. FORGE writes: "The three Wadded Quilts Messrs. F. Hodgson & Son sent me are very warm and light. I am very pleased with them. Please dispatch 3 more." Cheque inclosed, 10/-.

The "Queen's Royal" Household Carpets and Hearthrugs are extolled by all the Nations of the Earth.

Gigantic Sale of the "QUEEN'S ROYAL" Household

Sale Price.

2/- HEARTHRUGS Regd.

In REVERSIBLE RICH TURKEY PATTERNS, measuring 6ft. long, and 3ft. wide. These HEARTHRUGS have gained a world-wide reputation for MAGNIFICENCE, CHEAPNESS, and UTILITY, having no equal. Registered New Designs, and considered Works of Art. Thousands of Repeat Orders and Testimonials received, giving the highest satisfaction. **SPECIAL OFFER.—Three for 5/9; Six for 11/3; Twelve for 22/-.**

The "Queen's Royal" Household Carpets and Hearthrugs are patronised by Royalty, Nobility, and Clergy from all parts of the Empire.

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CARPETS (Regd.)

Trade Mark on all Goods. Beware of Imitations.

Admittedly the Cheapest in the World. *Woven without seam. Altogether superior quality, with handsome border to correspond. A marvel for excellence and beauty. Thousands of Repeat Orders and Testimonials received, giving the highest satisfaction. When ordering, please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.*

6 ft. by 9 ft.	... ...	7/6		
8 ft. by 9 ft.	... ...	9/-		
6 ft. by 12 ft.	... ...	10/6	REDUCED	
9 ft. by 9 ft.	... ...	11/-	SALE	
9 ft. by 10½ ft.	... ...	13/6		
9 ft. by 12 ft.	... ...	15/-	PRICE.	
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12 ft. by 12 ft.	... ...	21/-		
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12 ft. by 15 ft.	... ...	25/6		
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Octagon Villa, The Lizard, R.S.O., 15/8/98.—J. CARWARDINE, Esq., writes: "I am very pleased with the Carpet you sent me. I have saved 50 per cent. by giving you the order. I paid half as much again to a local tradesman for Carpets the same quality a year ago. I have never been so pleased of any former purchase."

Also RICH VELVET PILE STAIR CARPETS, bordered to match, 18in. wide, 1/8 per yard; 22½in. wide, 2/- per yard. 27in. wide, 2/3 per yard.

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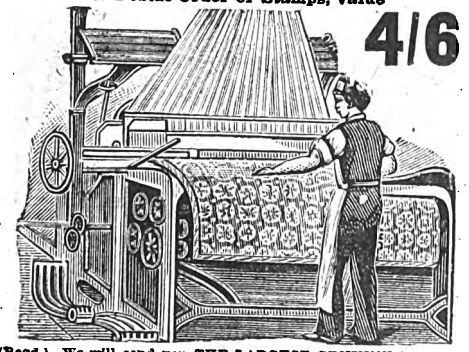
To Readers of "Short Stories," 31/3/1900, on receipt of Postal Order or Stamps, value



(Regd.) We will send you THE LARGEST GENUINE REVERSIBLE CARPET in BRUSSELS PATTERN WITH RUG ever sold at the price, direct from the Looms to any address on receipt of amount. Suitable for drawing-room, dining-room, bedroom, etc., bordered and woven in Brussels patterns, as an advertisement for our goods, thus saving any middle profit. Remember these are woven, and are made of a material almost equal to wool. Thousands of these Carpets have been already sold at double these prices.

SPECIAL OFFER—2 CARPETS and 2 RUGS, 8s. [Cut this out.]

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We rely upon spontaneous Repeat Orders from our Clients for the maintenance of our Trade. Established nearly a Quarter of a Century. All orders despatched same day in rotation as they arrive by post. N.B.—Foreign Orders executed and packed free, and shipped at lowest rates. Telegraphic Address: "ECLIPSE, LEEDS." Telephone, No. 948. *Cheques and P.O.'s payable to—*

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BRUSSELS HEARTHRUGS 5/6

In Rich Oriental and Indian Art Designs, measuring 6ft. by 3ft., which for price, real value, weight and richness of manufacture will be found unapproachable.

SPECIAL OFFER.—3 Rugs, 16/-; 6 for 31/-

"Melville Castle, Glasswade, Midlothian, June 1st.

The Right Honourable The VISCOUNTESS MELVILLE writes: "I am very pleased with the 'Royal' Velvet Hearthrugs to hand, and would like four more Hearthrugs. Her Ladyship would also like two Velvet Carpets at 39/-, one ditto at 60/6 to match them. Cheque £3 14s. inclosed."

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REAL BRUSSELS CARPETS

Extraordinarily Heavy, very Best Quality, Newest and Choicest Designs. In Old Gold, Sultan, Terra Cotta, Crimson, Sky, Navy, and the latest colours. With handsome border to correspond. Guaranteed to wear for years and give every satisfaction. The sizes and prices as follows (all ready for putting down):

REDUCED SALE PRICE LIST.

4½ ft. by 7 ft.	... 11/-	VELVET PILE BRUSSELS CARPET SQUARES	9 ft. by 12 ft.	... 38/-
6 ft. by 9 ft.	... 18/-		11 ft. by 12 ft.	... 47/-
7½ ft. by 9 ft.	... 23/-		12 ft. by 13½ ft.	... 52/-
9 ft. by 9 ft.	... 28/-		12 ft. by 15 ft.	... 69/-
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Altogether superior quality, with handsome border to correspond. A marvel of excellence and beauty. Thousands of repeat orders and testimonials received, giving the highest satisfaction. When ordering, please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.

Ramsden, Charlbury, 4/3/98.—Lady HICKS BEACH writes: "Will Messrs. F. Hodgson and Son send her one of their 'Queen's Royal' Carpets, 9ft. by 9ft., 11/-? Cheque enclosed. The other parcel received safely, and I am pleased with it."

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TURKEY PATTERN CARPETS (Regd.)

Reversible, woven throughout, bordered, richly blended in several colours to suit any furniture. These goods cannot be distinguished from real Brussels when laid down, and cannot be excelled in durability.

Size.	Each.		Size.	Each.
6ft. by 4ft.....	2/11	REDUCED SALE PRICE.	10½ft. by 12ft.....	11/6
6ft. by 7½ft.....	3/11		9ft. by 15ft.....	12/6
6ft. by 9ft.....	4/9		12ft. by 12ft.....	12/9
7½ft. by 9ft.....	5/11		12ft. by 13½ft.....	14/-
9ft. by 9ft.....	7/6		12ft. by 15ft.....	15/9
9ft. by 10½ft.....	8/6		12ft. by 18ft.....	19/6
9ft. by 12ft.....	9/6		12ft. by 21ft.....	22/6

When ordering, please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.

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SHORT STORIES

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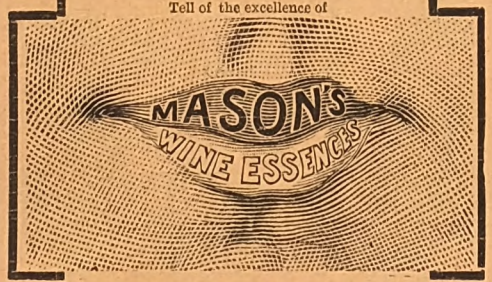

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SHORT STORIES

No. 588.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week Ending April 7th, 1900.

THE TALE OF A BIRTHDAY NUMBER.

EVERYBODY knew Sir Joseph Plumpton, and everybody—in Rosetta Avenue at all events—knew Horace Plumpton, his son and heir. But as to there being any connection between the two, *that*, to the public mind, was an impossibility.

Sir Joseph was the great pickle manufacturer; Horace was "the lodger at No. 17," familiarly known as "the literary gent."

Pickles had made Plumpton *père*; the same piquant additions to the table, (*vide* advertisement) had been, so the young man declared vehemently, the ruin of his son. For Horace was, or rather had inspirations in the direction of, a poet, and when did poetry and pickles go together?

Plumpton senior, at all events, decided that the two could never run in double harness. He gave his son the choice, and finding that the perverse young man refused to give up scribbling sent him from the paternal roof and crossed him, if not out of his will, at any rate out of the business.

And so Mrs. Reed of 17, Rosetta Avenue, gained the lodger, which she wanted badly, her neighbours in that charming suburban retreat gained a fresh subject of conversation, also badly in request, and the editors of various journals gained a new contributor, which they didn't want at all.

Poor Horace was, no doubt, having a very bad time of it. His *forte*, in his own estimation, lay in the direction of epic poems, and judging by the number of returned MSS., "the heroic" was a drug in the market; he then tried his hand at stories of the bush, African life and so forth.

As he had never been out of England these most certainly should have been a success, and there is no accounting for the piece of advice given to him by a long-suffering editor to the effect that "he'd do better, if he wrote about what he knew."

"And that," thought Horace, "would mean pickles."

So terribly discouraged grew this aspirant for literary distinction that he might have thrown up the sponge, or rather the pen, and returned to his father, had it not been for the advent of Miss Molly Earnshaw, who somehow or other had exercised a strong influence on his destiny.

Miss Molly was a typist, a brown-eyed, brown-haired girl with the sweetest voice and the cheeriest smile imaginable. Her introduction to Horace was informal to a degree, and came about through the agency of the maid of all work at No. 17.

Molly occupied "the parlours" at Mrs. Reed's and, therefore, was brought but little in contact with the other lodgers. In fact, she did not know one from the rest, and, save for a hurried "good morning" in the passage, never exchanged a word with them.

And, had it not been for "Jane," this state of things might have continued till the end of the chapter.

Now "Jane" was above everything else a tender-hearted damsel. Lodgers might come and lodgers might go, but number and variety never exhausted her well spring of human sympathy; her tears were ever ready to flow at tales of "altered circumstances," "delayed remittances," etc., and her belief in the ultimate arrival of the latter was not to be shaken by innumerable disappointments.

And thus it was that Molly, descending to the lower regions in quest of her breakfast, some half hour late, found the domestic plunged in grief, and giving noisy demonstrations of the same, over nothing less than Horace Plumpton's boots!

"It cut me to the heart, it do, miss," said the girl, sniffing vigorously, "for the pore young gentleman to catch his death of cold. This," holding the boot out with an expression of contempt, "is nothing but brown paper, the other's no better."

Molly listened sympathetically, but suggested that she was already late and would like breakfast, and, the better to forward Jane's preparations for the same, volunteered to carry the boots to the top floor front where Horace was domiciled. And of all mornings Horace, usually the latest of risers, selected this one to be up and dressed and waiting on the landing for his boots.

Over the banisters he caught sight of Miss Molly's pretty head with its weight of chestnut hair, could distinguish the numbers of curls and twists with which it was decorated, and fell to wondering however she got them to stay up. His cogitations were abruptly ended, however, by the sight of a pair of boots daintily carried in her small white hands.

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Horrors! they were his boots, his worst boots—and he had secretly admired Miss Molly for months!

"Poor fellow," she said softly, "they are bad, I am very sorry for him."

After that there was nothing left for him to do but to come forward as gracefully as he could, relieve her of the boots and try to look unconscious of their dilapidated condition.

"Er—Thank you," he said, "it's very warm this morning, is it not?" which was hardly an original nor even an inspiring remark from a poet.

Miss Molly smiled, thereby showing as white a set of teeth as anyone—saving a dentist—could wish to see. Somehow the memory of that smile haunted poor Horace for the rest of the day. It certainly hindered the progress of his work, but, all things considered, that didn't matter very much, he thought disconsolately, for his MSS. were like the famous cat, they invariably "came back."

They were his boots, his worst boots.

It was about six weeks after their first meeting that Horace and Molly had tea together, in the latter's little sitting-room.

Etiquette as understood in Mayfair was not practised in Rosetta Avenue, and therefore conventionality was not outraged by Molly's issuing the invitation, nor by Horace's acceptance of the same. The young fellow had grown thinner, it seemed to Molly, and she and Jane had had several confidential talks relative to his altered appearance.

It was a pouring wet afternoon and something about him, his dejected air, and hopeless expression induced the girl when they encountered on the doorstep to ask him in.

"It's such a wretched day," she said, "and there's nothing like a good cup of tea as a remedy for the weather. Mrs. Reed, as I know too well, invariably sends one up a weak decoction flavoured with smoke. Suppose you try my brew, instead?"

She found him a great deal more interesting than she expected. Under the thawing influences of a dainty meal, a bright fire and Miss Molly's smile, Horace forgot his self-consciousness, and his shabbiness into the bargain, and talked and laughed almost as much as his hostess.

"I wonder," she said, after a pause, "you have the courage to go on writing after so much ill-luck; why don't you turn your attention to something else for a bit?"

"That's all very well," he answered with a sigh, "and I might consider the proposition if I had any alternative but the one fate, or rather my father, offers me. Poetry," with a wan smile, "you must agree, is preferable to pickles."

She glanced at him a trifle apprehensively. Surely he must suffer from delusions.

"You must know my father," he went on desperately, "everybody does, unfortunately, Sir Joseph Plumpton is ——"

"The manufacturer, of course, how stupid of me. But, if you are his son, why on earth—" She faltered, conscious that she was treading on dangerous ground.

"You mean how do I come to be in this low water?" he asked pleasantly. "Well, that's a long story, Miss Earnshaw. My father is determined that I should throw all my energies into the business. I, on my part, have made up my mind to devote myself to literature. Neither of us can see the way to alter our minds."

"Surely a compromise," faltered Molly, divided between astonishment that the fair-haired young fellow before her should have so much "grit" in him, and surprise that Sir Joseph should be so obstinate.

"I'm afraid not," answered Horace, "we're both of us rather obstinate and a little hot-tempered. Sooner or later, you know I'm bound to succeed. Perseverance must tell in the long run."

Somewhat encouraged by her sympathy, Horace took to reading her his poems, articles and stories, and, sure proof of his regard, did not even feel offended when she advised that all the "epics" should be burnt, and persuaded him to rely in future, upon fiction.

Wonderful to relate, he followed her suggestion, consigned his "masterpieces" to the flames and turned his attention to short stories.

A measure of success rewarded his efforts and it was, therefore, in great good humour that he ran in one Saturday to Molly Earnshaw with a letter from his father in his hand.

"Look!" he exclaimed, "what do you think of this?"

The letter was, in effect, a tendering of the olive branch. Sir Joseph gave it as his opinion that his son had "played the fool" long enough. If, however, he was still taken up with his scribbling, he, Sir Joseph, was ready to consent to his entering on that line of life for good and all; but only on conditions.

"If," he wrote, "at the end of the year you can prove that you have earned by your writings, say £200, I'm ready to waive the question of your entering the business and will make you a suitable allowance, but, should you

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fall short of that sum, you on your side must undertake to give up all ideas of authorship and enter the factory at once."

"Well," said Molly, sharply, "shall you accept?"

"Provided my father agrees to a certain stipulation."

"What is that?" asked Molly, fidgeting with the blind cord.

Horace came a little closer.

"That in any case he will welcome my future wife."

"I didn't know you were engaged," said Molly, flippantly, "what is her name?"

The young fellow glanced quickly at her face. Apparently what he read therein satisfied him, for, with a quiet smile, he drew her, unresisting, to him.

"Her name is Molly, dear," he answered, "and she's the sweetest little woman in the world."

"All the same," said she, some moments later, "you never asked me."

"For shame, Molly," laughed her lover, "why, you kissed me!"

And so Sir Joseph's conditions were accepted, he on his side agreeing to his son's. Furthermore, he sent a handsome cheque for "every-day expenses" as he termed it.

"And now, my darling, I've nothing left to do but write stories," said Horace, gleefully.

Molly, a trifle more experienced, replied. "And get them accepted, dear."

"Oh! that of course," said Horace.

* * * * *

It was just about this time that a change occurred in the fortunes of Molly Earnshaw.

She was offered a position as typist in the office of a weekly journal, a chance that she eagerly took advantage of, and which enabled her to be of some slight assistance to Horace.

That young man had made a fair amount of progress since Sir Joseph's letter, but although encouraging, it was hardly conclusive.

Nine months had elapsed since he left home, in another three the year ordained by his father as his limit of probation, would expire, and, sad to relate, his literary earnings during that time hardly amounted to £30.

Unless some extraordinary stroke of luck intervened, he would be compelled to resign himself to a future utterly repellant, loathsome even, and bid farewell for ever to the hopes, bright though elusive, which had cheered him through the darkest days of despondency of doubt and weakness.

Another trouble was added to those already overburdening him, and this time it came from the girl who, hitherto, had always been the one to assure, comfort and console him.

"Horace," she said one day, "I have been thinking things over, and if all does not turn out as we wish, I mean, supposing you can't fulfil Sir Joseph's condition, it will be better for us to break off our engagement."

The young man stood aghast.

What had come to her, what was she thinking of? the cruelty, the hard-heartedness of such a proposition!

"Not at all," said Molly firmly, "'tis only common sense. You told me yourself that your father had set his mind on your marrying his partner's daughter, and that he was very disappointed when he heard you were already engaged."

"Her name is Molly."

"Well, and what has that to do with me?"

"Just this, that if you please him in one thing he may come round in another. Marry the woman he wishes to be your wife, and, I expect, he won't press the matter of your going into the business."

"And you propose that I should gain my own ends by deliberately sacrificing you. Why Molly, I thought you *cared* for me?"

"Well, and what greater proof could you want than that I am ready to sacrifice everything for you?"

"That's just where you women make a mistake," said Horace, "nine times out of ten a man does not want sacrifice but affection. He requires loving human sympathy, and you offer him the cold shoulder of duty. Come, my darling, say that you won't dream of anything so foolish or unkind."

But the utmost that Molly could be induced to promise was that she would not again mention his marrying Katie Seymour. Further than that she would not go.

Some few days after, Sir Joseph himself appeared upon the scene, attired in all the splendour that modern dress will allow even a millionaire. Personally, Sir Joseph would have preferred to walk out in a red plush robe of aldermanic proportions, preceded by a mace bearer or a pair of pages at the least. As it was, his huge diamond pin and studs, his multi-coloured tie and extensive waistcoat struck due awe in the breasts of the small boys down Rosetta Avenue, and caused quite a large number

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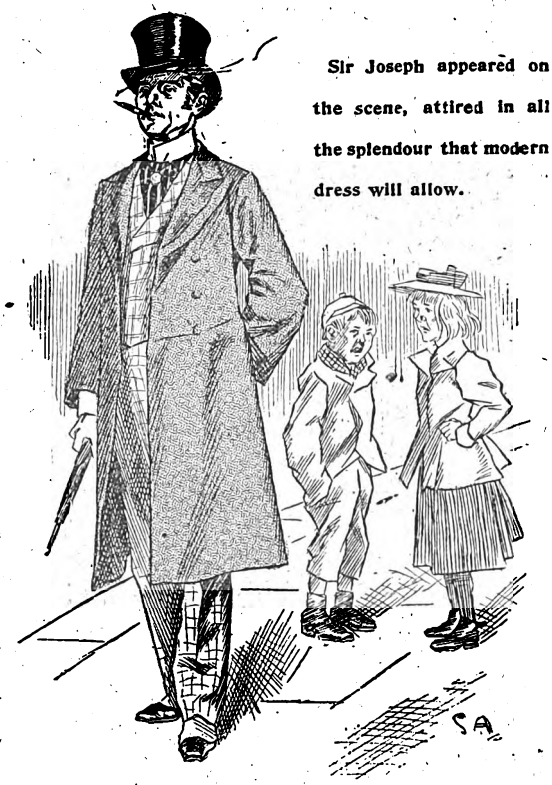

Sir Joseph appeared on the scene, attired in all the splendour that modern dress will allow.

of well-meaning women to leave their work and congregate at their front parlour windows.

Sir Joseph expressed himself pleased at his son's accommodation, being secretly gratified at the landlady's ill-disguised admiration. He chuckled somewhat offensively on learning the large sum still required to make up the £200 required as proof of Horace's literary capacity, and prophesied that before long he would forget all "that nonsense," with a sweep in the direction of the "copy" his son was turning out, and become enamoured of pickles.

"Tell you what it is, though," said he, after a while, "I don't mind going a bit further than my word, if you'll be reasonable. You shall continue this scribbling business and welcome, if you'll throw over this typewriter girl and marry Katie Seymour. She's a good girl, a pretty girl, and what is more, heiress to £20,000. Come, Horace what do you say?"

But as to that there could be but one reply.

Never, never, never, would he give up his sweetheart! until Sir Joseph lost his temper and retired precipitately.

Horace did not, however, communicate the substance of the interview with his father to Molly, and took comfort from the fact that she did not again refer to the vexed question of Miss Seymour.

Moreover she had a piece of good news for him. The paper on which she was employed, to commemorate their birthday number, had offered a prize of £150 for the best story sent in.

Horace's hopes ran high at the prospect.

The £30 had crept up to forty, there was a certainty of his earning another ten, and if he could be sure of the prize, that would make a grand total of £200, and Molly, his darling Molly, would be his, and he should be for ever released from the prospect of the business which he so detested.

Many and anxious were the conversations that they had as to plot, construction, and characters for the all-important tale.

Molly worried herself quite ill over the selection of a title, and Horace declared that the whole thing aged him by years.

When at last the manuscript was despatched they both felt relieved of an immense weight, and went to the theatre by way of celebrating the auspicious occasion.

"We'll go abroad when we're married, Molly," he said, "for a year at least. Just think how splendid it will be to see all the places one has dreamt of, longed for, with the woman one cares for most in the world."

And Molly, for once throwing aside her forebodings, assisted in building castles in the air, and peopled them with as light a heart as Horace himself.

"I think," she said, as they wished each other "Good-night," "that if your story is chosen for the prize, I shall feel inclined to embrace everybody in the building, from the editor down to the office boy."

"In that case I would be inclined to wish for failure—if I were jealous."

"And aren't you?"

"Not a little bit, not even as much as you are of Miss Seymour."

"As if I cared for *her*. Why she has red hair. You don't think her pretty, do you Horace?"

But Horace declined to say, murmuring that it was not good for certain people to be flattered, and that "red" was by no means a bad colour.

"Very good indeed, as far as flannel is concerned," retorted Molly, with which parthean shot she closed the conversation, and the door—the latter with somewhat unnecessary violence.

The weeks passed but slowly, dragging into months in that leaden footed fashion so hard for youth, hot and impetuous, to bear.

"I wish it were over," sighed Horace, twenty times a day, whilst Molly sincerely echoed the wish.

"This competition will do us a lot of good," observed the editor of *Questions* one morning. "The circulation has gone up immensely within the last month, and I expect we shall double it very soon."

Molly listened with her heart in her mouth.

Matters rarely brought her into contact with the editorial department, but, of late, she had made a hundred and one excuses for the purpose of trying to glean some information as to whom the lucky winner of the prize might be.

The competitors had sent in their stories under assumed names, but poor Molly listened vainly for any mention of "Hugh Sinclair"—her lover's *nom de plume*.

The suspense was telling on the girl, and no one would have recognised in her the bright-faced maiden of a month ago.

And then, one morning, she awoke to the consciousness that on that day her fate, and her lover's, would be sealed, for on that afternoon the birthday number went to press.

It was impossible to settle or work. Somehow or other she must find out who had won the prize. Her heart was thumping painfully, and her hands trembled in spite of all her self-control as she passed into the editor's room.

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The great man was at his table and apparently immersed in manuscripts.

"It's hard to choose between the two," he was saying as she entered, "this one," throwing a MS on the table which Mollie recognised with a contraction of the heart. "is every bit as good as the other. And yet I'm half inclined to give the preference to the one you have."

"There's certainly very little difference, but I agree with you, that, if anything, the one I've just read is the better."

Molly's heart stood still for a moment.

The editor paused, then reaching out his hand, took the story from the other.

"That's settled," he said, with a sigh of relief, and placed the two MSS. side by side.

And the one that was *not* to have the prize was signed "Hugh Sinclair."

Mollie waited for a moment, her brain in a whirl, a lump in her throat that somehow she could not swallow.

Then with a desperate effort she approached the table.

The other man had left and she and the editor were alone.

Still trembling she laid hold of the precious MS.

"I think you said this was nearly, if not quite, as good as the other," she faltered.

"Yes."

"Well then," said Mollie, faintly. "I think I should give it the prize."

"Really," was the amused answer, "and for what reason?"

Mollie glanced round fearfully, then, with a last effort, gasped:

"He's the son of Sir Joseph Plumpton, and"—grasping the handle of the door, preparatory to flight—"*our advertisements are getting rather low.*"

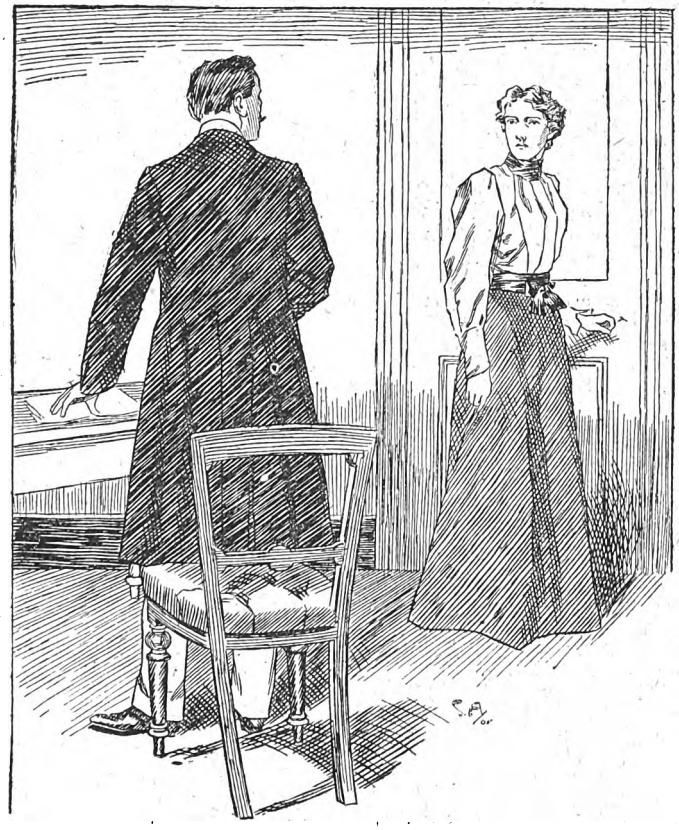
* * * * *

The issue of *Questions Birthday Number* was in many respects an important one.

To begin with it brought about the marriage of Horace Plumpton and his sweetheart Mollie, inasmuch as that fortunate young man gained the £150 prize and thereby fulfilled his father's stipulation that he should show proof that he could earn bread and cheese, at all events, with his pen.

Secondly, it increased the circulation of that very remarkable paper in a marvellous manner which, doubtless, was the cause of Sir Joseph Plumpton spending some thousands of pounds in its advertisement columns.

As for Molly, being of an unusually tender conscience, she went about for a week or two consumed with remorse at the supposed sufferings of the other competitor, whose story had been as good, if not better, than her lover's.



"He's the son of Sir Joseph Plumpton."

At last she was compelled to make confession to Horace himself.

"I can't help thinking that perhaps that poor John Robinson—such a commonplace name, isn't it?—is terribly unhappy, and although I would do just the same again, I'm sorry for him, at all events."

"You needn't be," said her lover softly, "he's just the happiest, most to be envied fellow in the world."

She looked at him reproachfully.

"Most to be envied?" she repeated.

"Yes, darling, in all the world. Listen, dear," he added, "John Robinson is one and the same person as Hugh Sinclair and your humble servant. I sent the other story in because at the last moment I hit upon another, and it seemed to me a better idea."

"And it would have been just the same if I'd never interfered," exclaimed poor Mollie. "Oh, Horace, you'll never tell anybody, will you?"

Her lover laughed and promised.

But, nowadays, he's such a very well-known writer that his wife has quite forgotten that his first success was owing—through her interference—not to his talent, but Sir Joseph's pickles.

But, even so, Horace often laughs quietly over "The Tale of a Birthday Number." J. R. Prothero.

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A Fishing Adventure.

"WHAT! Going to the island for more fishing? This will be the fourth consecutive day you have been there. It isn't the fishing, it's the girl who goes there. But, I don't believe you have the slightest chance of making her acquaintance."

"That's all you know about it, Jack Bannister. I could get an introduction to her any day if I wanted to."

"That's very easy to say, Arthur White, but you know that it can't be done. That girl is the daughter of the owner of this lake and the island—the man who has stocked its pools with trout and from whom I obtained permission for us to do a little fishing there—and it isn't likely that you could get an introduction. Not one of us three knows anyone here who could undertake the kind office of introducer."

The three young fellows were enjoying a three-week's holiday, part of which they proposed to spend in trout fishing; but Arthur White appeared to be doing more fishing than was agreeable to his companions, who had already spent two days without him—they preferring walking excursions on those days.

White flushed at Bannister's remarks and his annoyance showed itself in words. He was usually a self-possessed young man, and it was rather strange that his companion's banter should irritate him as it evidently did.

"I can get an introduction to-day if I wish," he retorted sharply. "And to prove it I will bet you a sovereign that I come back from the island with her either in her boat or in mine—that is, if she goes fishing there to-day. You're not game enough to take the bet?"

"Done!" exclaimed Bannister. "Pacey"—turning to the third man—"you hold the stakes. I am not at all afraid of losing that piece of gold."

As he spoke, Bannister took a sovereign from his pocket and tossed it into Pacey's open hand; White did the same, and the stakeholder put both coins carefully into his purse while a peculiar smile flickered about his lips.

"Am I to go to the island to watch the game and see who wins the bet?" he asked mischievously. "There is a good deal of brushwood on the island and I dare say I can obtain a full view of the scene without being observed. What do you say, Bannister?"

"No!" It was White who answered, and he did it very decidedly. "You know me well enough not to doubt that I shall play fair, don't you?"

"A sovereign isn't picked up as easily as that every day," remarked Pacey in a tone of pretended indifference, "and I thought you might arrange the matter with the lady and go halves in the sovereign."

A laugh from Bannister, in which Pacey joined, cut short the angry retort that rose to White's lips, but the laughter only served to make him more angry inwardly and more determined to win the bet.

The spot where Miss Rose Hayling was angling for trout was one of the quaintest on the island. The configuration of the place was sufficiently interesting to attract the notice even of a casual observer. A few yards to the right of her the water came sliding down a smooth slope of some thirty feet, and the continual running had worn the lower banks so smooth that the fisher had to be careful of getting too near the edge, as the least slip would send him or her into the water without a chance of being able to clutch at anything to prevent the catastrophe.

By the time the water had reached the particular spot at which Miss Hayling stood, it was quiet and suitable for her purpose.

"Five," murmured the young lady as she neatly landed a six-ounce trout and placed it in the basket. "That isn't bad work, and I have had the pleasure of being quite alone to-day. Those three may be very nice men, but I don't want them. I am half inclined to believe that one of them was here yesterday; I thought I heard signs of his presence, but I didn't see him, for which I was thankful. Now for the sixth, and then I must get back."

She was just on the point of throwing the line for the final catch when she heard a breaking of twigs above her and she saw a basket come tumbling through the air, spilling trout in its flight, and then she observed the figure of a man with outstretched arms, apparently engaged in a novel attempt to "shoot" the slope down which the water was running. The next instant the man went splashing into the basin in front of her and disappeared.

Rose Hayling gave a little cry of dismay, but she was a young woman of nerve and at once began to think of rendering practical assistance. Then a head appeared above the water, and in spite of its bedraggled look she recognised one of "those young men."

"However did you get there? Can you get out?" she asked, anxiously. "Let me help you," she added, as she stepped nearer to the edge.

"Don't come too close," warned Arthur White, raising one hand and waving her back. "You will slip in if you do. I'm all right and can get out alone, thank you. But where is that big trout?"

She turned in the direction in which he was looking and above her she saw a big fish attached to a line which had caught on the branch of a tree. It was struggling to get free, but it was held fast by the hook, and the weight of the rod hanging on the other side kept it suspended in the air.

"What a beauty!" exclaimed Rose involuntarily. "Why, it must weigh about three pounds!" In her

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admiration she had momentarily forgotten the plight of the fisherman.

"I should think it was!" came from the man in the water. "Can't you get hold of it before it releases itself and drops into the water?"

"I'll try. But how about yourself? Do let me help you!"

It required an effort to refuse such an offer from the girl who formed the subject of his admiration and the subject of a bet, but he did refuse it and began to scramble for the bank while she endeavoured to dislodge the trout.

She accomplished her task without much difficulty by means of a forked stick, and when she turned to look at him she found that he was still treading water and apparently unable to clamber up the side.

"Can't you get out?" she cried, once more becoming anxious. "No, I can see you can't; the banks are too steep and smooth. Wait a little and I will help."

She seized a cord that lay in her basket, tied one end securely round the trunk of a sapling and threw the other end to him.

In a couple of minutes he was by her side, dripping wet but otherwise—to all appearances—none the worse for his ducking.

"But how did you——"

"I was trying to land that trout and slipped," he replied, as she paused without finishing her inquiry. She did not notice that he seemed rather confused. He went on hurriedly: "I slipped somehow, and down I came to frighten you."

"Well, you did startle me a little," confessed Rose, "But you will catch your death of cold; you must get back to your hotel at once. Where is your boat?"

"I am afraid that I have come upon you very unceremoniously," said White apologetically. "I believe I have the honour of addressing Miss Hayling? My name is White, Arthur White. May we accept this as an introduction?"

Rose drew herself up stiffly for a moment and White felt it would not be safe to push matters far. Then Rose answered, unbending, that she thought it might be accepted in lieu of a more formal affair and again asked him about his boat.

White felt awkward. He began to say hard things to himself for having made that foolish bet. It was really lowering the girl, and he experienced remorse for his action. She was worthy of higher thought than that. But he was in a tight corner, and in some confusion he stammered out a reply to her question.

"Unfortunately, my boat is adrift. I suppose I forgot to secure it or did not tie the rope properly; anyhow, it is drifting about on the lake and I must wait till I am taken off."

There was a moment's silence; Rose felt that it was her bounden duty to offer him a seat in her boat, while White, now that he had the chance of winning his bet more easily than he had anticipated, was revolving in his mind the most polite manner in which he could refuse her offer when it came. Such are the oddities of human nature.

The offer came and he felt forced to accept it; Rose declared that she had had enough fishing for one day and was quite ready to go home. White took the oars and rowed, but he insisted upon taking her home and would not listen to her suggestion that he should direct the boat to his hotel and leave her to row back to her father's private landing stage. She wondered why he was so persistent in his refusal, and all the time he was hoping that by so doing he would avoid being seen by Bannister and Pacey.

When he had helped her out of the boat and had handed to her the basket with the five trout, he asked her if she would accept the three-pounder, but she gracefully, though firmly declined. He tossed it to the bottom of the boat, and, after wishing her good day and promising to send the boat back at once, he pulled off again.

"Hullo! Had a ducking?" asked Bannister and Pacey in a breath as their companion appeared, soaked to the skin. "And how about the bet?" asked Bannister.

"Lost it!" was the reply. "And I lost my footing also and got wet." And that was all they could get out of him.

"I have made a big donkey of myself," muttered White to himself several times during the following day. "Of course she could see that I was playing her a trick, for she never once hinted that we might row round after my boat. I expect I have lost all chance with her, yet that affair of yesterday has made me more in love with her than ever." He groaned in spirit. "She's a girl out of a million, and I might have had a chance if I hadn't made such a confounded fool of myself. Bother Bannister and his bet too!"

He debated within himself whether he should go back to London immediately or stay at the hotel and endeavour to retrieve himself. He was of a good family and quite a match for Miss Hayling from a financial point of view, and if he could recover lost ground he might reasonably hope to win her. But could he retrieve himself?

He made up his mind to try, and a conversation that took place between him and his two companions one week later indicated that he had, at least, made some progress. Bannister and Pacey both made allusions to the frequency of his visits to the island and the fact that Miss Hayling also seemed very partial to similar outings.

Three more days passed and Arthur White announced rather sheepishly that he was invited by Mr. Hayling to form one of a party in a day's excursion to one of the sights of the district.

"Oh!" ejaculated Bannister in surprise. "Then you have got as far as that, eh, I say, old fellow, let us know when the day is fixed, won't you?"

White pretended to treat the question with indifference, but a slight increase of colour betrayed him. Bannister and Pacey made lame jokes about lovers and did their best to make White feel uncomfortable, but they did not succeed in drawing him any further before he left them to join the party.

That afternoon, White and Rose Hayling strayed from the others and found themselves in a secluded spot by the side of a stream which reminded them both very forcibly of the adventure which led to the introduction to each other. Involuntarily they looked at one another and their cheeks became of a brighter hue. Their eyes sank again, but the emotions which caused this were different in the two young persons.

"Bother that bet!" muttered the uncomfortable White under his breath. "Perhaps it would be better—but she would——"

"Doesn't this remind you of—of the island?" asked Rose in some confusion.

"Very much indeed!" remarked White with some show of warmth.

A long pause followed.

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At length White took his courage in both hands and began desperately:

"Miss Hayling—Rose—I am going to ask you a question."

"Oh, I hope it isn't a riddle; I never was good at conundrums," replied Rose, sweetly, fixing her eyes on some distant object and trying her hardest to keep the tell-tale colour from rising to her cheeks.

"No, it isn't!" cried White, feeling more desperate than ever. "At least, it isn't to me and I don't think it will be to you. But first I have a confession to make."

"A confession, Mr. White?" asked Rose Hayling, raising her eyebrows.

"Yes. You remember when I had that accident on the island and tumbled into the water? Well, it wasn't an accident."

"What was it, then?"

"A trick. I feel the most despicable man under the sun. Rose, I—well, I may as well tell it straight out—I made a bet that I would get an introduction to you and row you home, and I purposely tumbled in front of you in order to get that introduction."

"And you got the chance of rowing me home, too. Was that a trick? I suppose you cut your boat adrift with that intention? It was hardly the sort of thing a gentleman would do!"

If ever a man felt crushed, that man was Arthur White. He could not lift his eyes to those of the girl he loved; he could only indulge in the insane pastime of throwing pebbles into the stream. Had he turned his eyes to her, his task would have been rendered far more easy.

"Have you nothing to say in mitigation?" she asked in a strange voice.

"Yes!" he exclaimed vehemently. "I love you! That is the explanation of it all. But I am not quite so bad as you may think me; I regretted the bet as soon as I had introduced myself to you, and I blamed myself for treating you in such an unworthy fashion. I tried to get out of the affair by declining your offer of a seat in your boat, but you insisted and the pleasure was too great for me to resist. But I took care to row you home instead of going towards my hotel as you wished—I did that to avoid my companions seeing me and you together."

"And you won your bet?" The voice was still strained.

"No, I lost it. I told them I had lost it and I paid the money. So, you see, I did what I could to repair my error. Rose, dearest Rose, do not think too harshly of me! Tell me, there is yet some hope for me?"

He was looking at her boldly now and had taken her two little white hands in his big brown ones. She made no resistance, but her eyes were downcast and she tried to avoid his ardent gaze.

"Rose, can you forgive me? Will you not tell me that there is hope for me?"

The answer came in the brief word "yes."

He drew nearer to her and placed one strong arm round her waist. Her head sank on his shoulder and his fears were set aside.

"I am not sure," began Rose Hayling about half-an-hour later, "that there is not a little confession due from me. One of your friends is Mr. John Bannister, I believe?"

"Yes, I knew it."

"Well, Arthur dear, he is my cousin and—and—we had a little bet, too."

White looked at her in some surprise, but his clasp of her waist did not relax. This seemed to reassure her, and she continued more boldly:

"I think that my cousin Jack must be a match-maker and that he has laid his plans for bringing us together. He told me that he was coming down here, but he declined our hospitality for reasons which he said he would communicate later. In the course of conversation he offered to bet me that I could not catch so many trout within a specified time, and on accepting this bet, we made another."

"That was to get you on the island every day?"

"I expect so. The second bet was that I dare not ride across the lake in a boat with a visitor whom I might encounter on the island, if he offered to do it. I did not suppose that anyone would offer to do it, as I did not see how the occasion was to arise; but I am rather strong-minded and do not like to be dared, so I went a little further and said that, if necessary, I would even offer a man a seat in my boat."

There was a pause and then Rose continued.

"I made the offer to you, when you said your boat had drifted away, quite innocently and out of good nature; and it was not, I assure you, until we were fairly in the boat that I remembered the bet. I have seen Jack since, and he vows that I did it on purpose; so if he chaffs you, you will make him understand that it was nothing of the sort, won't you, Arthur?"

"Of course I will! It seems to me that Bannister has been trying to bring us together. He induced you to visit the island every day, and I remember now—although he pretended to chaff me about my love of fishing—that he really induced me to come to the same spot. It was he, too, who proposed that we should come here for a holiday! And—I can see through it all now!—you are the cousin Rose whose praises he has so often sung to me."

"It's as clear as daylight," cried Rose. "He is continually talking about his chum Arthur whenever we meet. Of course, that is you! Oh, fancy cousin Jack Bannister acting the part of match-maker!"

"Well, it has turned out for the best, Rose, and has brought happiness to both of us. But I forgot, you haven't specifically said you would be my wife."

"Because, you foolish boy, you haven't properly asked me yet!"

Evidently, Arthur did ask her and received a proper answer, for he was able to tell Bannister and Pacey, when he returned to the hotel that evening, that although the day was not exactly fixed, it soon would be.

Among the presents that were sent to the happy couple on the occasion of their marriage was a big stuffed trout. It came from Bannister, who said that he had found it lying neglected at the bottom of the boat on the day when White had a ducking, and he had taken care of it as he knew that is would fall a very acceptable wedding gift, one that would remind them of what they would afterwards regard as the happiest moment of their lives.

G. Merriam.

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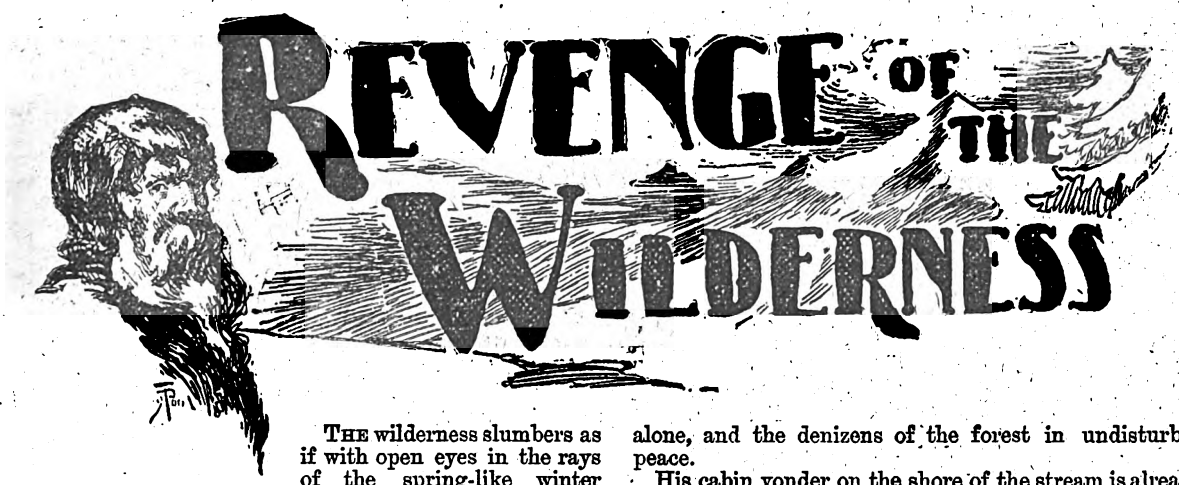

THE wilderness slumbers as if with open eyes in the rays of the spring-like winter sun. The snow has already melted from the branches of the trees, but the drifts lie deep in the forest, on the ice, and on the fens. The sun shines warm in the open places, but the air is chilly in the shade. On the wood-covered slopes of the mountain the fir needles have already thawed so much that they emit a faint odour of rosin, and the birches spread in the middle of the day their first fine fragrance as if they had a foretaste of coming spring mornings.

A ski-runner has stopped at about the middle of the mountain slope in an open place, where he can view the landscape below, where fens and lakes, streams and woods interchange. At the foot of the mountain where, between two water-courses, a waterfall reflects the sun, he sees the roof of his cabin.

He is a hunter, the sole inhabitant of these lonely forests as far as the eye can reach from the crest of the mountain. The whole country surrounding these water-courses he has taken possession of, as there is no one else who could claim it.

No trace of human footsteps has been seen here since the year of the great war, when some fled westward, others again were carried by force to foreign countries.

He inhales the mild air and the fresh scents of the forests, while his look, satisfied and friendly, penetrates the bushy hair which covers his forehead.

Contentment dwells in his mind—contentment because the power of winter is about to be broken and its iron grip has loosened. Not even this winter has brought about what he feared. The ski-ing will now soon be over, before long the snowdrifts will disappear, and no hunters from inhabited regions have shown themselves here.

Far away has remained this unknown danger of which he always had a presentiment without knowing whence it would come. If it would but come at once so that he were through with it. But his mind is always tranquil in the spring when it has failed to appear during the winter. In the summer no one could find the way here.

He is a broad-shouldered and muscular man, but also tall and slender. His dress consists of homespun and furs. He carries on his shoulders his weapons, bow and quiver of arrows, and on his back a bundle of traps and snares which he is bringing home from the forest. The hare and the fox do no longer walk into his traps, nor does the ptarmigan run into his snare. The coupling time has come for them all. The game must be left alone, and the denizens of the forest in undisturbed peace.

His cabin yonder on the shore of the stream is already full of pelts, his catch during the winter. To-morrow he will load them on his sledge, and on his skis pull the load to the market. There the merchants will delight in them, and say that better furs could not be bought even from the king's hunters, but where they come from nobody knows, for Ahra does not explain his circumstances and place of abode. Always has he led questioners and spies astray, and his purchases have been brought home without leaving a trace behind him.

With growing satisfaction he looks toward the wilderness, this friend who does not know of anyone but him, and a smile overspreads his lips. He feels possessed of a sudden whim: How would it be to slide, for fun, down the dizzy height to the ice and let the wind howl about his ears?

He is just about to do so, when the sound of a barking dog reaches his ears from the foot of the mountain.

He is startled, for this is not the usual bark of his dog, spirited and yet friendly, which he emits when barking at a squirrel in the trees, nor yet the strained and serious one when chasing the fleeing game. It sounds as if intended for some large animal which the dog both hates and fears but dares not attack, for the bark is cautious, doubtful and at the same time angry.

Ahra whistles to the dog, whereat the bark is changed into a howl.

"A wolf," he supposes, and runs down on his skis.

"A wolf it is," he decides more firmly when the dog with tail between his legs meets him halfway on the slope.

The man's look is getting cloudy, the satisfied smile disappears from his lips. He bends his muscular body, and the most intense curiosity is reflected in his face as he takes a fresh start to hunt his prey.

The dog, who feels braver in the company of his master, retraces his old tracks down the steep, but when he reaches even ground he makes a short bend and disappears among the birches on the shore of the lake.

Ahra runs without being able to stop his skis at the place where the dog turned in among the trees, but a the moment he crosses the tracks he notices that the are not the tracks of a wolf, but those of skis.

He stops instantly, jumps into the snow and stays the drift up to his knees a good while, as astonished if lightning has struck before his eyes. Then he moun

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his skis slowly and approaches the strange tracks, bent and watching.

Yes; they are really ski-tracks. Someone has come from the lake, skied up the forest here and seems farther on to have again approached the shore in the direction of Ahra's cabin. Whence has the ski-runner come? Where is he going?

Who is he? A Finn from the South he is not, that Ahra knows from the tracks made by the runners; neither is he one of the Dwina people, their skis are broader. This one has under his ski a piece of reindeer's hide that in the ascent of the hill has left a plain mark. Therefore, he must be a Lap.

But what is he doing here? And whence does he come? From the South he has not come, for Laps dare not go to the inhabited regions yonder. From the North he has come to linger in this neighbourhood. He has come here to spy, and when he does not find more than one inhabitant he will at the beginning of summer bring his whole tribe down the streams to fish in the lakes here.

Ahra ran beside the strange tracks which after having made a slight detour into the woods, turned abruptly in a straight direction towards his cabin.

This cabin is low, half-imbedded in the earth, built by an open spot at the shore of the calm water below the rapids. In the centre of the open stands the storehouse where Ahra keeps his pelts, dried fish, salted meat and other stock. It is built on poles as safety against the robber bands of the forest, the wolves, the foxes, the weasels, and the rats. These often come here rummaging and smelling all over, but cannot get hold of anything. Many a fox has he tracked from here, hunted and killed when they, starving, have roved around in search of plunder. To judge from the tracks, the Lap has stopped in the open place and withdrawn from there, sneaking back behind the cabin. There he has left his skis and on foot walked round the cabin to the storehouse, which he has looked at from all sides.

With growing satisfaction he looks toward the wilderness.

Ahra had no more the slightest doubt concerning the object of the slant-eyed Lap's travels in this neighbourhood and what he sought here. It was also clear to him what he had to do. If the Lap did not succeed in returning to his tribe, the others away yonder would understand that destruction awaited them, and therefore he not venture here.

The Lap had not gone very far, as he, no doubt, had left only at noon, for Ahra noticed at once that the ski-tracks led over hoar-frost, which already had begun to fall from the trees.

He had made up his mind and prepared for departure. He dressed in his cleanest and best hunting suit, put provisions in his birch-bark bag and brought forth his best weapons—bow and arrows, a hunting knife, a hatchet and a light spear, which also could serve him as a ski-staff. Finally, he selected his best skis which he only used on long journeys.

When he now mounted his skis and glided along the thicket he felt as when hunting big game—the same excited and expectant feeling in his bosom, the same tension in his limbs and the same swelling unrest in his blood to get away.

His eyes were afire, his lips compressed, sharp lines showed around his mouth, and in his first ardour he exerted confidently, almost angrily, all his power, as though his prey were to be found in the nearest field.

The tracks of the Lap, which he started to follow immediately, and with which those of the pursuing dog were seen to mingle, led above the rapids along the course of the stream to the shore of the big lake.

A short distance above the rapids the Lap had stopped to fish. He had cut a hole in the ice near the shore and angled there. He had caught some fish, too, the scoundrel, cleaned it and left the scales and entrails on the snow.

Ahra's anger was rising.

"The Lap has been fishing in my water, and as in mockery, has thrown the refuse there. A thief, a noxious animal is he who devours the prey that has been trapped by the hunter. Perhaps he has done this to spoil my fishing and to drive away my luck."

This thought gave fresh nourishment to Ahra's resentment, and with powerful strokes he glided back to follow the tracks anew, which again led to the shore of the lake, and always in the shelter of the woods. He seemed to have entertained a certain fear that he was engaged in a wrongful pursuit.

First at the centre of the bay, where there was a group of islands, the tracks changed their former direction and led in the shelter of some smaller islands across the bay.

After reaching the opposite shore they went straight through the woods toward a ridge, whose bare and timberless top was lit by the setting sun, while the lower places were already in the shade.

Unacquainted as he seemed to be with the surroundings, the Lap had gone up there to learn the direction of the route and to reconnoitre.

Twilight also prevailed on the mountain top when Ahra reached there after having skied through the swampy woodland, all the time following the Lap's trail.

The latter, however, had so long a start that Ahra could no longer hope to reach him this evening. He wa

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forced about midnight to go to rest in order to move early in the morning.

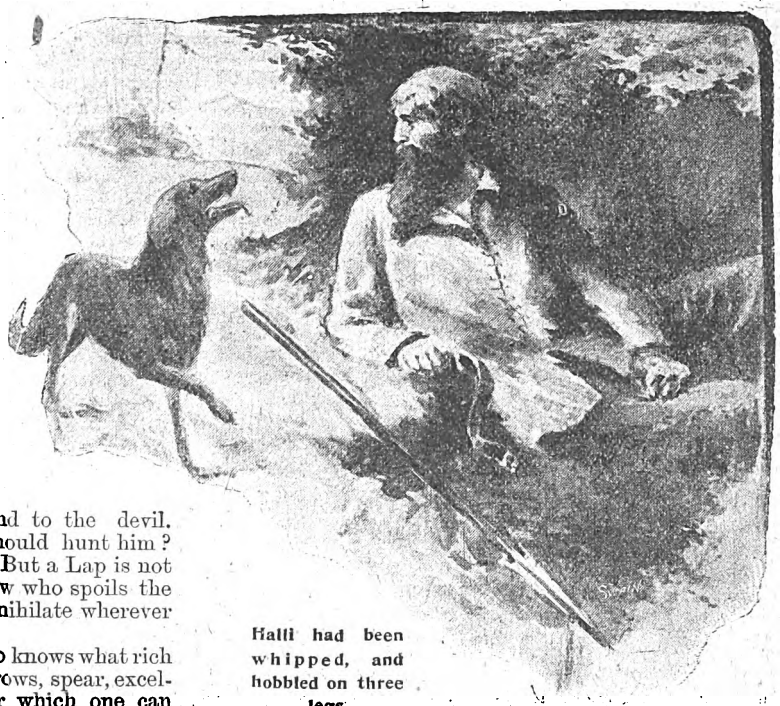
While he was looking for a suitable place to sleep, he heard the barking of a dog somewhere in the distance. Halli had followed the Lap's trail all day, and had not returned yet. It was probably he who growled yonder. Ahra began to make new calculations. The dog had not got into a fight, for then there would have been a greater noise. Perhaps the Lap had killed him, shot Halli before he could attack, or maybe he had pierced him with a spear.

Ahra began to feel low-spirited, as he had not dared to make a large fire in his camp, although he was wet through with perspiration. And had the Lap now on top of it all killed his comrade and friend?

"Why should I pursue him? Why do I not let him depart in peace and to the devil. What harm has he done me that I should hunt him? One ought not to kill a human being. But a Lap is not human, he is a dog. An envious fellow who spoils the woods and fishing one has a right to annihilate wherever found.

"Perhaps he is also a rich prey. Who knows what rich thing he is carrying? A good bow, arrows, spear, excellent skis. Perhaps gold and silver, for which one can get everything he needs."

All Ahra's scruples vanished when Halli, at the break of day, came to his couch. He had been whipped, and hobbled on three legs. So soon as it became light enough to see, Ahra started, firmly decided to hunt down the stranger, even though it carried him into Lapland.



Halli had been whipped, and hobbled on three legs.

The Lap did not seem to have been in a hurry. When he had reached the deep forest on the other side of the mountain, he had skied hither and yon, something in long curves, but steadily in a northerly direction.

Here and there he had dug under the snow to see if any lichen grew there. Ah, this was, then, his object in coming here. Once he had caught a hare, and another time he had shot a woodcock, to judge from the remains of the bird.

Skilfully had he done all this like a fox or a lynx that only by the aid of their scent know at a distance where their prey is hiding and steal right upon it without making unnecessary detours. A splendid huntsman is the Lap, none is his equal in the forest. The denizens of the forest fly to meet him as surely as they flee from others.

Envy possessed Ahra's mind, and he bit his teeth together. The consuming envy of the huntsman grieved him, as he followed the Lap's trail, which here took a short cut over low meadows and then turned into such thick underwood that his big pursuer only with difficulty could push himself through.

From the wooded vale the trail continued to a height on the top of which the fugitive had made his fire. Here the Lap had intended to spend the night, here were seen plain traces of his meeting with the dog. To judge from the evidence, he had tried to entice the dog with pieces of meat, but when Halli did not allow himself to be fooled, the Lap had thrown a big stick of wood after him.

"Halli, my true, my faithful friend, you have not allowed yourself to be taken in by the Lap's tricks, however skilfully he may know how to enchant the animals with his looks."

When the dog now had returned to his master, the vagabond fled in a hurry. He had in the greatest haste, abandoned his fire and camp. His uneven tracks amused Ahra, it looked as if the Lap had tried to fly, so hurriedly had he paddled forward, as when a young weak-winged water-fowl flutteringly whips the water without making any headway.

Ahra now exerted all his power, and only relaxed his speed when he noticed that the scared fugitive gradually had calmed himself, and begun to run slower. The Lap had either got tired or he had begun to consider his fears exaggerated.

The tracks were now even again, and the skis had run as lightly as if an animal had hastened forward on the drifts. Nicely ran the trail on the frozen snow, now along the ridges, now through the primeval forest. Sometimes the Lap had, for fun, let it drive down the mountain slope, and easily had he ascended the most precipitous heights.

Ahra forgot gradually why he really hunted the stranger—forgot that he pursued him to kill him; and he travelled along like a wanton boy who, in merry frolics, runs about in the woods and quite secure looks for a roguish friend without knowing when he will appear from behind a tree trunk or peep out from behind a stone.

Away yonder, at the brink of the ridge, the Lap had on a high rock eaten his meal, after which he seemed to have light-heartedly skied down the height straight over the dangerous precipices without slipping and without using his staff.

By a long detour Ahra had to run down the same precipice in shelter of the trees, and by constantly using his staff. Below the mountain was a steep rock so high

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that the mightiest fire of the wilderness did not reach its top. Ahra had to take a round-about way but the Lap had leaped clear over the tree tops and then disappeared. Had he flown through the air, or remained in the trees?

In vain Ahra searched beneath the rock in the dense pine forest, in vain he looked toward the tree tops, and equally in vain between the trees. He believed himself bewitched, and began to suspect that he had chanced to pursue the veritable Son of the Forest, who skis on the earth when it pleases him, but as often takes a short cut over the tree tops. Ahra thought of returning.

But the skirunner had not stayed in the tree tops, had not flown through the air, but reached the earth in a marsh that lay so well hidden below the mountain, sheltered by the trees that no one could guess its existence before the shore was reached. There the Lap had been thrown from the brink of the rock without falling. Slightly had he tottered on his knees, and his "peski" grazed the snow where its hem had made a wheel-like impression. Thereupon he had serenely skied forward.

The pursuer again considered giving up all hunt for such a game. Twilight had commenced, but nevertheless he continued forward.

The sides of the swamp were steep all round, and there seemed to be no exit. The tracks of the Lap led into a sort of winding lane, inclosed by mountain walls; but Ahra discovered at last an opening which led into another somewhat larger swamp, likewise inclosed by steep wood-covered mountain heights. The evening shades were falling more and more. The sun had already sunk behind the mountains, and the rocks seemed in the dusky light to rise higher and steeper. Ahra did not know this neighbourhood, he had never been here before. He really did not know where he was, and something within him commanded him at last to enter upon his return journey.

He did not have time to cry out.

Still doubtful about what to do he was gliding forward slowly, when he found a hole in the ice in which the Lap again had caught fish and cleaned the same. He must just have been there, as the thrown-away entrails of the fish had not had time to freeze.

This sight broke the spell and drove the hunter again after his prey. It could not be very far away. The place was just one that would tempt the fugitive to make the camp for the night.

The lakelet was nearly round and in its centre rose an island like an hillock. In its direction the tracks of the Lap were to be seen.

Ahra now tied his dog and commanded him to be be quiet, and started in the shelter of the rocks to steal round the lake. When he returned, after having walked right round the lake, he felt sure the Lap was on the island from which no track came.

At this moment a fire gleamed from between the trees on the island. The Lap consequently had no idea that he was being pursued. Soon the fire blazed in the green branches, lighting the dense pines of the island and sending straight towards the sky a thick smoke, which, in its lower part, was black, but as it rose higher was slightly tinged by the evening-red.

Ahra pressed himself in strained expectation close to a rock. He stood there completely immovable, as only a hunter can when he lies in ambush for game.

Darkness settled, the evening-red ceased, and the smoke could no longer be distinguished, but he saw the fire glimmer and heard it crackle when the brands were stirred.

Once or twice he heard the Lap hum a song. Then the humming ceased. The fire decreased as from a stock fire that burns evenly. Ahra heard no sound now except the splashing of an occasional water drop falling yonder among the rocks, while the stars above him twinkled against the surface of the water as against the bottom of a deep well.

Once more Ahra hesitated about what to do. He felt as if something mysterious had frightened him, as if it lay in ambush for him and forced him to stand still, and almost kept his breath.

But when the night grew colder, and the cold was biting, and he still saw the fire yonder and imagined the Lap in his warm clothing resting on soft pine twigs by the fire, anger suddenly mastered him.

"That scoundrel wishes to provoke me, he has come here to spy upon me, to mock me and inveigle me into running after him. He is an impudent vagabond—a robber who takes the game from me and spoils my fishing, and is an abomination to my woods."

Ahra grasped his spear, mounted his skis and glided forward in the direction of the fire.

The Lap was sleeping by the fire and did not notice the approach of his treacherous foe.

Ahra dismounted as he reached the island and stole on him with bent body.

The sleeper was a youth in a "peski" of reindeer skin, hemmed with red cloth. At the foot of a pine he rested on his back with his hands under his head, while the fire lighted his childish innocent features.

Ahra had never seen the holy Son of the Forest, but like this he had always imagined him.

Perhaps he was Nyrikki himself, Tapio's son, who had come here at the command of his father to examine the woods, and next winter drive his game here. One must not disturb Nyrikki. One must not hurt him. If he comes in your way, you must avoid him.

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The point of his spear, which had been aimed ready for instant attack, was lowered, and Ahra stepped back in order to withdraw. Then a twig broke beneath his foot. The sleeping boy awoke, sat upright with a quick movement and rubbed the sleep from his eyes.

Then Ahra lifted his spear and forced it with such power into the boy's bosom that it went right through his body and nailed the youth to his resting place.

He did not even have time to cry out—he moaned like a shot hare, while the blood spurted from his mouth and nostrils, but in the death agony his body twisted itself and sprawled like a fish in a fisherman's gig, whereat the handle of the spear quivered so much that he was forced to grasp it with both hands.

The boy twisted continually in his agony, and shook convulsively the spear, and the murderer's hand, and his whole body, until his power gradually diminished and finally ceased, and he sank down dead.

But when Ahra wanted to pull out his spear, the point of which had penetrated deep into the ground, he felt a shiver, first in his body, then in his hands, in the spear itself and in the body of the murdered man—a shivering fit so violent as nearly to tear the clothes off his body.

He could not even disentangle his hands from the spear handle. The more he exerted himself the more violently they trembled, and he felt himself as thoroughly shaken as if he had been bewitched.

It is the witchcraft of Lapland that shakes him, its influence has entered the murderer's body from the blood of his victim.

Then comes his dog, who had broken loose, and jumps with a dismal whine, up to his master, whereat his hands are able to let go of the bewitched spear.

But the spell was not broken; vengeance was not yet satisfied.

Ahra staggered to his skis at the shore, and skied to the edge of the swamp, where he stopped and where the howl of the dog from the island reached his ears.

He wished to cut himself a ski-staff from a young fir, but his trembling hand could not hold the axe, then he tried to pull out the tree by the roots, but his trembling hands refused to serve him.

Without a staff Ahra skied homeward in his former tracks. But not even in his home was he free from the curses of the dead. Whatever weapon or tool he may take—spear, staff, bow, axe, oar or fish-spear—always the same shivering fit came over him.

He must leave his beloved wilderness and go to inhabited regions; he must desert his cabin and his storehouse by the stream; must leave the game, the forests and the groves and all his possessions, leave the paradise he owned to someone who, some time in the future, would chance to come up here to live and take possession of them all.

Arrived at a new settlement, strangers put hoe and spade in the hands of Ahra, the quondam free and daring huntsman, and these tools he could hold, no trembling prevented their use.

Neither great nor deep are the thoughts that come and go in Ahra's mind. Only this is clear to him, that if he had let the Lapland youth, undisturbed, depart his way—if he had not attacked Tapio's son—he would not now dig here in a rocky ground.

For the wilderness has avenged its son, and has banished the man who broke its peace.

J. L. Thorburn.

"See Jones over there, laughing so heartily? Someone must have told him a funny story."

"More likely Jones told it himself."

"You have a magnificent library."

"Yes. When I think of the amount of money I've sunk in that collection of books it makes me feel quite intellectual."

Mother: "Instead of beating the cat, Willie, I wish you would amuse yourself with your rocking-horse."

Willie: "Yes; but when I beat the cat he howls, and the horse doesn't."

"Do you believe there is really anything in phrenology?"

"I do. I had my head examined by a phrenologist once, and the moment he came to my first bump he told me that my wife used an old-fashioned rolling-pin."

Doctor: "Dyspepsia. You want to drink a cup of hot water first thing every morning."

Patient: "I always do. My landlady invariably serves 'tea' for breakfast."

"See that fellow who just went into the bank? Well, five years ago he was sweeping the floors of that very institution."

"And now he is——"

"Doing it still."

Mrs. Brooks: "I suppose the Smiths have a complete history of our family by this time."

Brooks: "Why?"

Mrs. Brooks: "They engaged the servant girl who left us last week."

"Mamma," cried little Willie from the bath room, "please get me another sponge."

"Why, what's the matter with the one you have?" asked the mother.

"It's full of holes and leaks awfully," was the reply.

Mr. Meeker, who had gone to the front door to answer the postman's knock, put his head inside the door of the room where his wife was sitting.

"It's a letter for me, my dear," he said. "Shall I open it?"

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The Wooing of Fame.

ANTONIE, a bookseller of the Quai d'Orsay, tried two matches on the asphalt pavement, and was then forced to resort to the lining of his coat, for the morning was very damp. Having at last ignited the tobacco in his short clay pipe, he proceeded to arrange his wooden cases along the parapet of the river. Next he affixed the price tags—ranging from ten to one hundred sous—and hung out two glaring "Une Feuille Morte" posters.

Thus prepared for custom, the ancient Antonie seated himself on his little camp-stool and shivered until the sun came through the fog, bringing with it a fat priest who purchased, and a shabby bibliomaniac who simply browsed.

Towards noon business grew brisker, and even a Member of the Institute paused to look over the stock.

"This is a glorious day, friend," he observed in measured terms, but before Antonie could word a reply a sallow-faced young man pushed forward and demanded instant attention.

"One copy of 'Une Feuille Morte,'" he cried. "Two copies—three—all that you have—quick!"

"There is but one left," said Antonie, producing a red-and-gold volume; "they sell very readily of late."

With a fierce cry of anger, the young man flung down a gold piece. Then, to the astonishment of all beholders, he caught up the book, wrenched it in two, and tearing out page after page, wildly stamped them under foot.

"A curse upon it!" he raved. "I will destroy every copy in Paris—in France—none shall escape me. 'Une Feuille Morte' must not be read."

Persons in the street paused to learn the cause of the disturbance. The gamins formed a circle round the young man and jeered at his insane conduct. In return the victim crumpled up handfuls of the printed leaves and hurled them in the faces of his tormentors. At the very height of the excitement a carriage drove up and a beautiful woman sprang out.

"Louis!" she cried, forcing her way through the dense crowd. "Louis, my love, forgive!"

The young man started violently and gazed about as if unable to believe his senses. In a hoarse voice he asked:

"Who speaks?"

"I, my love," said the woman, as she ran forward and threw her arms round his neck. "I, Marie d'Amoureux."

There was a murmur of surprise from the on-lookers. The writer of "Une Feuille Morte"—"They were once lovers."

"Louis," pleaded the woman, "forgive me. I was carried away by my success. I still love you."

"Leave me," cried Louis harshly. "I will have no words with you."

"Louis," said the woman, as she quickly mounted the parapet, "if you do not forgive me—if you still renounce my love—I will throw myself into the river."

The young man turned on his heel without a word—and that instant Marie d'Amoureux leaped from the parapet. As she struck the water Louis uttered a wild cry of remorse, and before anyone could stay him followed the woman into the Seine.

Old Antonie was so overcome by the excitement that he sank down on his stool and panted for breath. The dignified Member of the Institute seized a bookback and fanned him vigorously.

"They are saved," cried the crowd. "A boatman has rescued them. He has dragged them into his barge."

"Thank Heaven!" ejaculated the Member. "She has the eyes and hair of an angel." And then to Antonie: "Have you seen them before? You must get me her book—'Une Feuille Morte.'"

"The man I have seen," replied the old bookseller, "but the woman never. It is not long since I caused the arrest of this same Louis. It was very sad."

"They are being restored on the barge," said the Member. "I will wait until they are brought up. Come, now, what of this one of the yellow face?"

It was seldom that Antonie had so distinguished a listener, and he related the incident with great relish.

"I had noticed this Louis," he began. "Every morning he would come and look, but go away without buying. One day a gentleman came to me and said: 'Antonie, you are being robbed by a young man with a sallow face. I can see it all from my window across the way. Keep your eyes open and have the police at hand.'

"It came about the very next morning. The young man approached, handled the book and then turned away. He was immediately arrested, and two copies of 'Une Feuille Morte' were found beneath his coat.

"Before the magistrate he told a story so strange that it has since been on every lip. His sweetheart, Marie d'Amoureux, wrote 'Une Feuille Morte.' No one would publish it. Marie was in tears. The young man took his savings and had the novel printed. No one would sell it; for there was no one to buy.

"Then came an act of still greater devotion. Louis, with so much of his salary as he could spare, purchased copies of the work from Marie, telling her that they were ordered by the booksellers. These copies he would place on the bookstalls by stealth, hoping that they might be read and appreciated. It was for such an act that I had caused his arrest. The papers told the

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pitiful story, and since then there has been a great demand for the book."

"But what of the trouble to-day?" interrupted the Member impatiently. "Why did he treat her so cruelly?"

"In return for her ingratitude," replied Antonie. "When success came she forgot Louis, who was poor and unattractive. Her smiles were all for another. Heaven only knows what has worked so great a change in her heart, and brought her to so passionate a deed. Perhaps she has only now learnt all that Louis has done for her."

"Ah, friend," sighed the Member, "how could he resist such an appeal? She has the eyes and hair of an angel."

"See," said Antonie, "there is a journalist using my bookstall for a desk while he makes notes of this interesting happening. How his pencil flies over the paper!"

The Member withdrew his gaze from the river. On beholding the object of Antonie's remarks, he exclaimed:

"My nephew!" and then louder: "Pierre, I congratulate you on being an eye-witness of this event. Your paper will doubtless appreciate your account."

Pierre glanced up, smiled, nodded, and went on with his writing. At last he closed his notebook, placed it in his pocket, and then waved a handkerchief above his head.

"Now uncle," he said, coming to the Member's side, "you will soon have a good look at Louis and Marie; they will enter their cab at this spot. They are now ascending the steps from the river, followed by the boatman."

Before the Member could form a question the crowd fell back and the lovers appeared on the Quay. Hand in hand, they advanced towards the bookstall, where a cab was in waiting. As they passed Pierre, the Member saw Louis direct a sly kick at the journalist's shins, while Marie favoured them both with an expansive grin.

"Nephew," said the Member, when the cab had driven off with its wet occupants, "do you know these persons?"

"In one moment," said Pierre, as he transferred some bank-notes from his pocket to the hand of the gallant boatman who had rescued Louis and Marie. "You may question presently. Now," he laughed, when the boatman had moved away, "I am at your disposal."

"What do you know of this affair?"

"Everything."

"What will be the end of it?"

"A third edition of 'Une Feuille Morte.'"

"I cannot believe," said the Member, "that they would be guilty of making public their inner lives for the sake of vulgar advertising."

"Yet such is the case," replied Pierre. "The book would never have sold without it. This is an enterprising age, uncle. Look!"

A waggon piled high with books and decorated with "Une Feuille Morte" posters had driven up. The crowd closed in around it, struggling to push forward their money and secure a copy of the novel.

"Behold the fruits of vulgar advertising," murmured Pierre.

"Is the book worth reading?" inquired the Member.

"Judge for yourself," answered Pierre. "You have witnessed a part of it. Louis and Marie are playing the plot of the novel—this was the second act. Would you call it interesting?"

"That goes without saying."

"I will also add, for your ears alone, uncle, that the actors are hired ones. The Zoinni brothers, high divers, were paid for leaping into the river, just as the boatman was paid for being there to pull them out. It was all carefully planned by the author."

"It almost surpasses comprehension," said the Member earnestly. "But the real Marie d'Amoureux, the author—I would give something fine to meet a person of such genius. Minds of that calibre are rare, nephew; exceedingly rare."

"You flatter me, uncle," said Pierre, the journalist.

H. M. Strong.

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WHAT IS THE "POOM."

The "Poom" is the creation of the fancy of Mr. Barry Pain, one of our wittiest living writers, who has written a screamingly funny article about the habits of the "Poom" race, entitled "Nature's Next Moves," in the April number of PEARSON'S MAGAZINE.

The April PEARSON'S is crammed with many other interesting papers, and powerful stories. An important article, to be read and remembered, is entitled "Russia's Iron Grip on China," which gives a graphic description of Russia's great enterprise in building the Trans-Siberian Railway from Petersburg to Port Arthur. "Pictures by Telegraph" describes a wonderful invention which enables pictures to be flashed over the telegraph wires as easily as words. The author of that famous book, "How to be Happy Though Married," contributes an intensely interesting paper describing the work of Army Chaplains in time of War. Himself a chaplain to the forces, the writer is able to deal with the subject from personal experience, and tells many good stories of the doings of "sky-pilots," as the soldiers call their chaplains, on the field of battle.

Mr. George Griffith continues, in the April PEARSON'S, his wonderful series of "Stories of Other Worlds," visiting, this month, Jupiter and his satellites, and taking his readers through many extraordinary experiences. Mr. Allen Upward writes again on "Historic Mysteries," while other powerful contributions make up an exceptionally brilliant number.

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Briton or Boer?

By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

INTRODUCTION.

For years past Britain and the Transvaal have been spoiling for a fight, and it was left to that well-known author, Mr. George Griffith, to write this strong and exciting serial nearly four years ago graphically describing a huge war between the two countries.

The story, coming so soon after the Jameson Raid, was read with unusual interest.

Now that Briton and Boer are in deadly conflict it will be interesting to read the story, and see how far the imagination of the author has actually come true.

SUMMARY OF OPENING CHAPTERS.

Chapter I.—The scene opens on the Rand. It is the eve of Amajuba day, and a State ball is being given. To this comes Prince Paul Regna, a Polish nobleman, and his daughter, Princess Vavara. They are introduced to Dr. Leyds.

Chapter II.—Dr. Leyds returns to Pretoria to attend a midnight consultation at the Government buildings. The Prince's rooms are in the Grand Hotel opposite. By tapping the wires, which cross the street at this point, the Prince and his daughter overhear all that goes on, and telegraph the result by secret code to Europe.

Chapters III. and IV.—Amajuba day dawns. The Secretary accompanies the Prince and Princess to Krugersdorp, where, from the base of the Monument of Independence, the President makes a great proclamation. The Convention of London is abrogated, the absolute independence of the South African Republic is declared; the President unfurls a Union Jack and rends it to pieces. So the storm bursts!

Chapters V. and VI.—On the following day Major-General Carrington learns at Buluwayo that all the wires have been cut between Rhodesia and the south and east. He concludes that this is due to Boer hostility, and prepares to meet it. Meanwhile a powerful British squadron appears unexpectedly in Delagoa Bay, and Lieutenant Ferris is sent ashore to take possession of the telegraph station.

Chapters VII. and VIII.—A Russian squadron is in the Bay at the same time. The flagship *Navarin* fires on the British destroyer *Thrasher*. Admiral Dale takes this as an act of war. There is a battle and the Russian squadron is defeated and captured. Michael Ostroff seeks to escape in the *Sokol*. He is taken prisoner, and important dispatches are found in his possession. Admiral Dale calls a council of war.

Chapters IX. and X.—General Carrington's campaign in the Matoppo Hills ends in the defeat of the rebels, the remnant of whom take refuge in a kopje, which is surrounded. A Rhodesian trooper and a private of Lancers capture a Boer disguised as a Kaffir, and take him into camp.

Chapters XI. and XII.—The Boer-Kaffir tells General Carrington that the Dutch have risen against British rule all over South Africa. The Matabele surrender, and give up the disguised Boers among them. These are shot. As the force moves southward the scouts are met by a girl, who tells them that the Boers have invaded Rhodesia and are marching on Buluwayo. Meanwhile, Admiral Dale informs the captains of the squadron in Delagoa Bay that no help can be expected from home, and that he intends to take absolute command of the coast.

Chapters XIII. and XIV.—General Carrington commissions Major Bryan to organise the Matabele Legion, and lead it against a detachment of the Boers lying in wait in a group of kopjes farther down the road. Major Bryan discovers that the girl who has brought the news is his sweetheart, Madge Morrison. Her people have all been killed, and he determines to avenge them. He sends a party of Matabele under Umzilizi on ahead to parley with the Boers.

CHAPTER XV.

A Lesson in Night Attacks.

As soon as Umzilizi and his men arrived, about half-an-hour before sundown, at the shallow gorge where the road entered the kopjes, just across the drift of the river Sigabi, a couple of Boers rode out and came clattering at full speed down the road, shouting to them to halt if they didn't want to be shot down. The old Inkosi, who had conned his lesson well, at once halted his men, laid down his rifle, and walked towards them, holding out his hands in token that he was unarmed, and that his intentions were peaceful.

The two Boers cast rapid, curious glances over the long string of armed men, wondering considerably where they had got their equipment from, for every man carried a rifle, and had a bandolier of cartridges slung over his shoulder in addition to the shield and assegais that he carried in his left hand; but what naturally astonished them most was the Maxim gun and carriage which had been dragged conspicuously to the front.

"Where are you from, and where did you get all your guns and that thing from?" said one of the Boers in the Kaffir-Dutch patois.

"Let us come through, Baas," Umzilizi replied in a tone of almost humble entreaty. "It is a long story, and we are not safe here. The English are behind us, and there is a great impi behind them. They are chasing us, and Imposhwan and Ndana are chasing them. There has been a great battle, and they are fighting still far up the road. Let us in and take me to the Commandant-baas so that I may tell him the story, and you may make ready to catch the English here among the hills when the impi drives them in."

The two Boers consulted together for a minute or two, and then the one who had spoken before turned to Umzilizi again, and said:

"You can come through and bring the Maxim with you, but mind—all the kopjes are occupied and you mustn't leave the road. If one man leaves it we will shoot you all down. Remember, there is a rifle behind every stone. Tell your men that if one fires his gun you'll all be shot, then you can come on with me to the Commander-baas."

"Ja Baas, you needn't be afraid; we don't want you to shoot at us; the Amabuna shoot too straight. We only want to help you to eat up the English."

He gave the order to his men, and then the whole troop followed the Boer down the road for about half a mile. Then he was told to halt his troop in the road, and caution them once more against leaving it, and then the Boer turned his horse aside to the right and, curtly bidding Umzilizi to follow him, went off at a quick trot up between two of the kopjes.

As the old chief did so he saw that what he had been told was not far from the truth. Every rock and stone seemed to hide its marksman, and as the little valley opened on to a bend in the road a terrible, sweeping fire could have been poured out of it which must have decimated any hostile advancing force. No doubt, too, the other side of the road

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would be similarly commanded at some other point, and small bodies of men would be placed in all the most advantageous positions farther down.

His conductor led him up by the back of the kopje, which was rather low and flattened at the top. In fact the summit made a little plateau thickly sprinkled with boulders and outcropping rocks, and between two of these, which formed an admirable natural breastwork, he saw a Maxim so placed as to be able to sweep the road for over a mile.

Among the little group of Boers standing beside it there was a rather slight, wiry built man of about forty, some five foot ten in height, with a tawny, straggling beard, a thin, keen face and rather deep-set, bluish-grey eyes. This was Commandant Frederick Potgieter, the man who had led most of the fighting at Krugersdorp and Dornkop against Jameson and his troopers, and cousin to the Piet Potgieter who had been shot with the other spies after the battle of the Nuanetzi.

To him Umzilizi gave a more lengthy and minutely circumstantial account of the great fight that had been going on for nearly two days many miles up the road. He told how the men he had brought with him were all that were left of a regiment which, after dreadful slaughter, had overwhelmed and killed to the last man a body of about two hundred white troopers, and captured, for the first time in all the war, one of the terrible little loud-speakers.

Then he went on to tell how, while this was being done, a great impi under Imposhwan and Ndana, two of their greatest war chiefs, had attacked the main column of the English some miles farther up the road, away beyond the Umzingwani among the hills by Vanda, and lastly how the English were coming down the road with their waggons and guns, fighting all the time, but hard pressed by the impi.

Commandant Potgieter heard him through in silence, watching him keenly all the while, and when he had finished he cross-examined him closely, but the inventive genius of the old man was quite equal to the occasion, and, moreover, the story that he told was after all the only plausible explanation of his presence there with his men, with the English weapons and the Maxim.

When he had satisfied himself that the story was at any rate approximately true, he got on to his horse and rode down into the road to see Umzilizi's men and the gun for himself. It didn't occur to him to examine the Maxim very closely, so, without discovering that an essential piece of the mechanism was wanting, he ordered some of the Matabele to drag it about half a mile down the road, and had it placed in a commanding position, after which he gave instructions for ammunition to be carried across to it.

Umzilizi laid down his rifle and walked towards them.

He then had the other gun turned round, for he had now changed his plan and had decided to allow the column to enter the kopjes without opposition, knowing that if he once got it between the two guns and surrounded by his own sharpshooters, nothing less than a miracle could save it.

This done, he told Umzilizi that although he himself trusted them, his men would not as long as they kept their rifle and bandoliers, so these must be given up and stacked in a place he would show him for the night. In the morning they should have them again; meanwhile they could keep their shields and assegais, which would be more useful than the rifles when the Boers had done shooting, and he promised that they should find plenty of work for them before sunrise.

When he had finished he cross-examined him closely.

This order had been long foreseen, for no one who knew the Boers would think for a moment that they would allow natives armed with rifles to go among them, and so Umzilizi had already explained it to his men and told them what to do. The rifles and bandoliers were given up without a murmur, and stacked away in a little hollow among some rocks. The Commandant then ordered Umzilizi to divide his men into two bodies, and post them on the higher slopes of the kopjes about the mouth of the long valley through which the road ran. They were to wait there until the English had passed in, then they were to come down quietly and cut off the retreat northward, while the Boers were doing their work with rifles and Maxims.

This was an unexpected piece of good fortune, and one that the wideawake old Inkosi was not slow to take advantage of. By the time his men were in position the darkness had come down, and man after man slipped away unseen into the night, taking with him fairly exact and complete information as to the number and position of the Boers to the squads under Major Bryan's command. These had meanwhile been closing round nearer and nearer, as the darkness covered their movements more and more completely.

A glance at the accompanying sketch-map will show the positions of the two forces. Major Bryan's squad is marked 1. The Boers were massed on the summits and the slopes of the kopjes commanding the entrance to the gorge from the north-east, fully believing that the only approach that could be made would be from that direction, as the whole country behind them was in their possession. They had further been most careful in stopping any news from going north, and thus, prior to hearing Umzilizi's story, Commandant Potgieter was under the firm impression that the British column, believing the road open to Tuli, would, after defeating the Matabele, as he expected it to do, march unsuspectingly into the road between the kopjes, and allow him to repeat the tragedy of Bronkhurst Spruit at his ease.

But now, if there was any truth at all in the Induna's story matters had taken an infinitely better turn from his point of view.

The British column, defeated and in retreat, would make the easiest and most unsuspecting of victims. The victorious Matabele would drive them into the narrow place of death, the Maxims and rifles would open on them without warning as they poured along the confined roadway. Their animals would stampede and their guns would be useless, the savage impi would crowd in behind them to take their share of slaughter and plunder, and then—well, then, when the British column was completely cut up, the Maxims could be turned on to the Matabele, who would be far too numerous and well armed to make desirable allies, and the power of both British and blacks would be broken at a blow.

It was a "fight" after the Boers' own heart, plenty of

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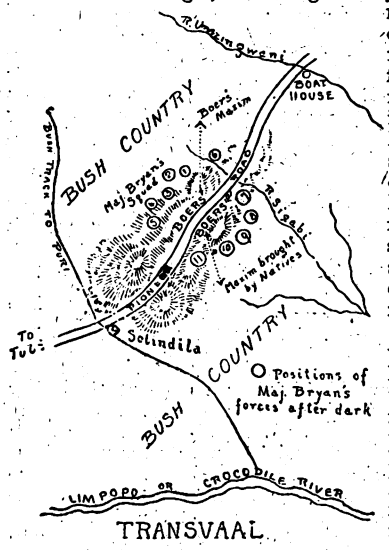
cover, every possible advantage on their side, and a practical certainty of victory. Nothing could be more to their liking or more completely in accordance with their traditions.

A belated aas-vogel,* wheeling heavily above the kopjes, noted nothing different in their aspect, nor did he gain any fore-promise of the feast that was to be in store for him and his kind by morning, so closely and quietly did the Boers lie in waiting for their prey, and so silently and stealthily were their enemies creeping up round them.



But at last, after waiting some four hours for the expected sound of the firing, which by this time ought to be heard in the distance, Commandant Potgieter and Brand Mentjes, his chief lieutenant, began to get impatient, and perhaps a trifle suspicious. What if the old story was a lie, and they were the ambushed instead of the ambush?

It was very dark, and there is nothing that the average Boer hates and fears like darkness. To him the shades of night are still peopled by spooks, and the lore of witches and evil spirits is still part of his creed. Nothing, again, does he hate more than uncertainty. If his enemy will come honestly out into the open veld and the broad daylight so that he can shoot him down without much chance of being hit himself, he is perfectly satisfied, and as brave as a man can be expected to be under the circumstances.

But to lie among those sombre hills and weird, uncanny-looking rocks, through the long still hours of night, with the uncomfortable feeling stealing upon him that someone might be coming from somewhere to do something that he could neither see nor guess at was a very different thing, and it was just upon this that Major Bryan had counted when he made his plans.

Another glance at the sketch-map will show the positions which the eleven squads which he had divided his men into, each under the leadership of three or four whites well practised in bush warfare, had succeeded in gaining unobserved, a little after ten o'clock, and just about the time the Boers were beginning to get very uneasy and sorely puzzled both as to what might be going to happen to them and what they ought to be doing themselves.

They were not, however, to remain much longer in uncertainty. Commandant Potgieter was standing on the little plateau beside the Maxim, looking up the road for the hundredth time through his night glasses, when a hissing, rushing sound broke the silence of the night, and a long curving train of sparks leapt up through the darkness on his left hand.

It stopped in mid-air a hundred feet or so above the kopje and burst with a loud bang.

Then a great globe of blue light fell from it, shedding a clear and ghastly glare for hundreds of yards round. Then, a second or two later, something struck a rock in the little valley up which Umzilizi had been brought. There was a stunning report, followed by the crash of an explosion, and stones and fragments of rock were hurled up into the air and came tumbling back about the ears of the terrified Boers.

To say that they broke cover and ran would be but a mild way of describing the effect of the first rocket. They leapt up out of their concealment and scrambled over the stones, stumbling and rolling over them and each other in a panic-stricken struggle to get somewhere—they didn't exactly know where, but anywhere out of the way of the raining stones.

But long before they reached the road other curves of roaring sparks soared up into the air all round the kopjes. The sky was ablaze with blue globes of fire, explosions burst out in every direction, some in the road, some on the top of the kopjes, and others in the valleys, rooting up stones and rocks, and flinging them far and wide.

The only man who didn't lose his head under the strange terrors of this new form of attack was the Commandant himself. The moment he saw the effect of the first rocket he let out a growling volley of Dutch oaths, and shouted to his men, who were on the point of running away, to help him with the Maxim. He dragged it out and and slewed it round till it commanded the spot where the first rocket had risen from.

Then he squatted on the saddle-seat and let go a torrent of bullets into the bush, and as each rocket soared up he swung the gun round and let drive at the ground it rose from.

"Guess that's sorter wild expenditure of ammunition, Major, if he only knew it. He'd be pretty mad if he could see he's only shooting trees, wouldn't he? Will you let me knock him over now, or shall he waste a few more cartridges?"

"Better let him go on a bit, Bethell; it keeps him occupied, and he isn't hurting anything but the trees. We want those chaps to be in a blue funk before we go in. You'll find they'll be shooting each other soon in sheer panic. This is the first taste they've had of this kind of fighting, though it won't be the last. I hope the other fellows have got all the positions well marked for the second volley."

"Reckon those Dutchmen 'll be thinking the spooks had a hand in this, dropping dynamite on them out of the sky. Great Cæsar's ghost, what a chance at that chap at the gun! Mayn't I let her go, Major? If I don't she'll be going off herself, for sure."

"No, no, Bethell; that won't do. You must wait till we get the second lot of rockets off, and then you can blaze away at anything you can see."

The Major had been carefully adjusting the angle.

This conversation took place between Major Bryan and Trooper Bethell at a spot about four hundred yards away from the one that the first rocket had risen from.

They were standing behind a ridge of rock that crossed the top of an outlying hill which commanded a good view of the plateau on which the Maxim was standing. Beside them was a tripod and rocket-tube ready charged, and while he was speaking the Major had been carefully adjusting the angle at which the rocket was to be fired.

From the head of the rocket there hung by a thin wire about eighteen inches long a packet wrapped in brown

* The South African vulture.

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paper, and containing half a pound of dynamite and a little fulminate of mercury. Attached to the touch-paper of the rocket was a long fuse, which would burn for eight or ten minutes. When the tube was adjusted to his liking, the Major struck a carefully-shielded match and lit the end of the fuse, then he clambered over the ridge of rocks, closely followed by Bethell.

They ran about three hundred yards across a little valley that separated the hill from the Boer position, and then they laid down and waited. At the same time ten other rocket tubes had been pointed, and ten other fuses lighted, and if day could have suddenly broken just then the Boers who still remained on the tops of the kopjes might have seen the glint of hundreds of rifle-barrels and thousands of spear-points among the bushes and stones moving up from all sides; but this the darkness hid from them as they stood staring about them in terrified perplexity, or ran hither and thither, shouting to each other in doubt as to who was friend or foe, or trying to catch their horses, which had been stampeded by the glare of the blue lights and the explosion of the dynamite.

"Plumb through the heart by the way he jumped."

CHAPTER XVI.

Turning the Tables.

The plan of attack on the kopjes on the Pioneer Road which had been elaborated by Major Bryan and his subordinates in command of the squads was very simple, as all such attacks must, of necessity, be if they are to succeed, but it was none the less effective. Each squad had been provided with two rockets and two charges of dynamite. As soon as Umzilizi's men had escaped from the kopjes under cover of the darkness, and given their information as to the position occupied by the Boers, the first rockets had been placed so as to burst as nearly as possible over their heads, and therefore drop the dynamite which was released by the explosion of the rocket somewhere among them.

This was to be done by the commander of the squad and his lieutenant for the time being. The natives, under the charge of the other white men, had been sent on to make their way slowly and silently up the outsides of the kopjes. It had been foreseen that the Boers would direct their rifle-fire, and probably also their Maxim, on the spots that the rockets rose from, and for this reason the fuses had been employed so that those who fired them might be far enough away by that time.

Then when the fire ceased a native was sent back to bring up the tube, which was to be planted for the discharge of the second rocket in the most convenient position that could be found within fifteen minutes. At the end of that time, or as near as might be, the second discharge took place.

While the fuses were burning and the Boers were disorganised by the panic resulting from the first series of the explosions, the whole strength of the eleven squads closed round and waited till the light shed by the eleven globes of blue fire showed them where to shoot and strike.

Thus it came about that during the few moments that the globes of fire hung suspended in the darkness hundreds of rifles began cracking all round the sides and tops of the kopjes. Many bullets, of course, missed their mark, for the shooting was naturally somewhat hurried.

Indeed, the effect looked for was rather demoralisation than killing, and in this the assailants were by no means disappointed, for while the Boers were running about hither and thither in the brief glare which showed them nothing, and hearing the spatter and splashing of the bullets on the rocks the second shower of dynamite descended, smashing rocks and boulders to fragments, and flinging showers of earth and dust and jagged stones up into the air as though a dozen little volcanoes had broken out among the kopjes.

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But some of the bullets were not fired at random, and among these were Trooper Bethell's. As the glare of the blue lights flamed out he saw a solitary figure standing by the Maxim. The barrel of his Martini-Metford was already pointing in the right direction. When the light came it shifted an inch or so, a stream of pale flame leapt from the muzzle, and the figure by the gun sprang into the air, and dropped out of sight.

"Plumb through the heart, if he had one, by the way he jumped," he said, as he slipped a fresh cartridge into the chamber. "It's as sweet-shooting a weapon this as ever was made, I think. Wonder who he was? Someone, I guess, with an extra pinch of sand in him, for the others have just vamoosed like a lot of rabbits. Say, Major, don't you think we might get the gun now?"

"We'll send a few more bullets into the place, and then I'm with you," said the Major.

They could just see the little plateau, and the two rocks that the gun stood by outlined against a clear bit of sky, so they put in three more rounds each, and then the Major put a whistle to his lips, and blew a long shrill call which was the signal to the rest to close in, and finish with rifle and bayonet and assagai what the rockets and the dynamite had begun. Then they started at the run for the plateau.

When they had covered about half the distance there was a flash from behind a stone about ten yards to their right and a bullet whistled between them as they ran half bent towards the ground. Then they heard the click, click, snap of a Lee-Metford, telling them that another bullet was ready. They both dropped on their faces among the stones. The hidden rifle flashed again, and just as the bullet splashed on a rock within a foot of Major Bryan's head Trooper Bethell's rifle cracked. There was a hoarse shout of pain and the sound of a rifle barrel striking on the stone.

"Pretty smart shot on the flash, that," said Trooper Bethell with pardonable pride. "Guess we shall show these chaps some rather tall shooting before we're through with them."

"Look out, Bethell, there may be more of them there," said the Major as the Yankee got up and went to see the effects of his shot.

"All right, Major, you cover me and shoot on the flash if any of 'em lets go. No, this chap's got his ticket. 'Tain't no return, either. Anyhow, he's limp enough to be pretty harmless. Now I guess we'd better get a wriggle on us or someone'll get that gun before us."

Trooper Bethell's rifle cracked.

Then they started off at a run again and reached the plateau without any further shooting. But as they approached the spot where the Maxim was standing they saw two or three dim figures moving about. The figures stopped instantly and faced round towards them, and a familiar voice, with a decided Cockney accent, sang out:

"Who comes? Dutch or English?"

"Guess we're white, Cocky, anyhow, if that'll suit you. The Major's here, and we'd like to know what you're doing round that pepper-box."

The levelled rifles went down, and Trooper Dempsey, who had given the challenge, saluted and said, ignoring the Yankee's query:

"We've just come up from the road, sir. We met half-a-dozen of the Boers coming away from here in a bit of a hurry, and as they wouldn't stop we made them. They're lying among the stones down yonder. Then we came on and found the gun with these two chaps here lying beside it."

"I reckon that's playing it pretty low down, you fellows," said Trooper Bethell rather disgustedly. "Darn these fool Dutchmen that wanted shooting on the way. If it hadn't been for them I might have had a chance of trading that pepper box for a stripe or so."

"Never mind, *Sergeant* Bethell," said the Major with a laugh. "You shot the man who might have used it. I'll see about the strips if we get through. Now, Corporal Dempsey, what are you doing here without your squad? They haven't run away, have they?"

"No, Major, they're all busy down yonder by the road, and they were enjoying theirselves so nicely in their own sweet way, I thought we might leave them to it for a bit while we came up to see after the gun. We met old Umzilizi as we came across, and he told us that the gun was up here and the commandant chap looking after it. I suppose it's one of these fellows here who seems to have met with an accident."

"Yes, I guess I got in first there," said Bethell, going forward to the gun-carriage and turning over the body of a man who was lying across the saddle. "This is the chap I plugged, so I reckon I'll put him aside for future reference. It was a beauty of a shot. Any darned Dutchman ought to be proud to be cleaned out as neat as that."

When he had lifted the body of Commandant Potgieter, as Umzilizi afterwards told them it was, off the Maxim carriage, the Major turned to Dempsey and said:

"Had you much trouble with the Dutchmen coming across?"

"No, sir. They was all skipping about the rocks like a lot of scared rabbits, and shouting to each other and letting off their rifles at anything that came in their way, and, Lawd, when the niggers got in among them it *was* a circus. Hear 'em going at it down yonder still! Them niggers loves the Dutchmen as much as the Dutchmen loves us.

"When I come through they was getting together a bit and forming up in the road as if they had thought on fighting their way towards Tuli, but I think most of 'em 'll get to Heaven first, if the Lawd 'll have 'em."

"How many do you think there are of them?"

"Couldn't say, sir, to a hundred or two—not in the dark. They was pretty thick among the stones when our chaps came down, but there ain't half as many of 'em now. Them assegais is awful things when you don't know where they're coming from. There might be a matter of two or three hundred of 'em straggling along the road, but our chaps is fair all round 'em now. Got 'em like rats in a pit. But that isn't what I wanted to tell you, sir."

"Well, what's that? Out with it sharp."

"It's this way, sir. The old Kaffir has showed Mac and two other of the boys where that gun is that they gave the Dutchman. They're with it now on a bit of a hill about half a mile down the road. There's plenty of ammunition with it, and they only want the lock to set her going. You see, sir, the Dutchman are right between it and this one now, and I thought——"

"Yes, I see, Dempsey," said the Major, taking the all-important little bit of mechanism out of his pocket. "There you are. Off you go now, as quick as the Lord will let you, and give it to them. Tell Macpherson when he's got it in order to fire three shots to let me know. When I reply let him go ahead. Hinton, you go with Dempsey and find Umzilizi, or some of his fellows, and tell them that all their men are to draw off and get among the rocks the moment the Maxim begins. Quick, now; there isn't a minute to lose."

"Right, sir. Ten minutes 'll do that easy," said Corporal Dempsey as he took the little paper packet and vanished with his chum down the side of the kopje.

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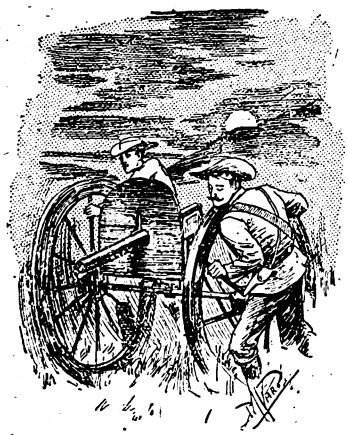
The first thing that Major Bryan did when he was gone was to pull the Maxim out of the position that Commandant Potgieter had put it into and slew it round so that it commanded the inner portion of the road. Just as he did this the moon, which had so far been hidden behind a long bank of clouds that lay along the horizon to the eastward, began to fringe its upper edge with silver, and in the growing light he could see down in the road beneath him great dim masses of figures swaying to and fro and lit up momentarily by spurting flashes of fire.



The Maxim was pulled round so that it commanded the road.

He saw that the moment he had hoped for had nearly come. The Boers, panic-stricken by the explosion of the dynamite dropping on them from the skies, and the sudden and stealthy attack of the Matabele from every side at once, had forsaken their cover and made for the road with the obvious intention of fighting their way out of the trap into which they had so unwittingly fallen. This was, in fact, their only chance, for they had no idea how numerous their assailants were, and to have remained in their positions or to have scattered over the kopjes would probably only have meant being hunted down one by one and stabbed or shot before they could have made their way to Tuli.

Minute by minute the light grew stronger, and as he waited for the anxiously-expected signal from Macpherson, Major Bryan saw that they were gradually drawing together in groups along the road, and he saw, too, that the better the light became the better chance they had of effecting their purpose. They were already beginning to shoot fast and straight, and in more than one place the Matabele were wavering and giving way before the well-directed bullets.

He was already on the saddle-seat of the Maxim, with his hands gripping the handles and his thumb on the spring, and Sergeant Bethell had the ribbon all nicely arranged to pass easily out of the box through the breech. If his suspense had lasted a few moments more he would probably have opened fire on his own account, but just as his patience was coming to an end there came out of the dusk towards the south three dull, thudding bangs at intervals of about a second. Almost before the echoes had died away among the hills, the Matabele seemed to melt away into nothingness, vanishing like dusky shadows into the darkness of the rocks and stones.

"I've got you now, gentlemen," the Major muttered through his clenched teeth. "I hope some of you remember Bronkhurst Spruit."

(To be continued.)

BINKS (during heavy rain): "Did you go and ask Mr. Jinks for that umbrella I lent him last night?"

Office Boy: "Yes, sir; he says he is very sorry, but the umbrella is still wet, and he wouldn't like to return it in that condition. He says he will carry it home to-night and dry it by the fire."

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of Frankfort Moore's "The Impudent Comedian," to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. R. Richardson, 26 Rankeillor Street, Edinburgh. Attempts for this week's prize may deal with ANY SUBJECT and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, April 9th. Post-cards only, please.

No Tail.

Two gentlemen met at a hotel, and, of course, started on the inevitable topic—the war.

In the course of the conversation Lord Roberts's name was mentioned.

One of the gentlemen, appearing engrossed at this, was asked by his friend what he was thinking of so deeply.

"Oh," he said, "can you tell me why Lord Roberts is like a two-headed shilling?"

After many attempts to solve this conundrum, the other gave it up.

"Well," said the questioner, with a twinkle in his eye, "because he is a Bob that can't turn tail."

R. R.

Commandeered.

Some army reserve men were being entertained at a farewell supper by their fellow-workmen.

"Now, boys," said the chairman, after an appropriate speech, "treat what is on the table as you would the Boers."

As the feast ended a reservist was seen putting a bottle of whisky into his pocket.

"What are you doing?" asked the chairman.

"Well," replied the reservist, "you told us to treat the supper as we would the Boers, and you know what we don't kill we take prisoners."

A. C.

Something Nice.

A gentleman heard that a young girl—whose mother was in poor circumstances—was recovering from a dangerous illness. Forthwith he went to a fruiterer's, and secured some choice bunches of hot-house grapes at about 7s. or 8s. a pound.

He carried them, not without some self-satisfaction to the house of the invalid, and left them with her mother, who received them in a dubious kind of manner that did not evince, as he thought, much gratitude.

This did not trouble him greatly, however, but the next day when he called he received a blow which almost made him resolve never again to be generous to strangers.

"How did your daughter like the grapes?" he said to the grim and undemonstrative matron.

"Oh, pretty well," was the reluctant reply.

"Did she eat them all?" was the next query.

"Yes, she got away with them," was the reply. "She is a good deal like me—she is very fond of tinned fruits."

H. K. P.

Fighting Fair.

During some volunteer manœuvres near York, last season, two men got separated from the rest of the company, and, in order to avoid capture, took refuge in a garden.

Presently, however, they saw a detachment of the "enemy" coming towards them under the command of a young lieutenant.

But this was to be no bloodless victory for the young officer, for out of an adjoining cottage marched a sturdy old Yorkshirewoman armed with a broom, which she swung threateningly about her as she shouted:

"Wad yah shoot 'em? Ah'll see whether you'll shoot 'em or not." Then she glanced scornfully around and added: "Why, there's more than twenty to one. Can't ye fight fair?"

W. L.

Wanted—a Jug.

A message was brought the other day to a gentleman just as he had finished dinner, and the messenger—an Irishman—was invited to "take something." Pat expressed his willingness to "take a drop of what his honour was having," and a liqueur-glass with Chartreuse was accordingly handed to him.

"And how is it made?" inquired Pat, after sipping with approval.

"I cannot tell you that," was the reply, "it's a secret compound—made by the monks, you know."

Pat sipped again, and again eyed the glass.

"Well, sir," said he, "if you tould me it was made by the angels I could belave it. Here's long life to the monks, and more power to them; but the divil fly away wid the man that made the glass."

J. K.

Caught Napping.

"Dear me, John, what a poor memory you have!" said his uncle.

"A poor memory you say?" returned the nephew. "Why, I can repeat sixteen columns of the surnames in the directory after reading them through only once."

"I'll bet you a hamper of champagne that you can't do it."

John sends for a London directory, attentively peruses sixteen columns, and shuts up the book.

"Well?" says the uncle.

"Smith, Smith, etc.," *ad infinitum*, repeated Carl.

And all the eight pages of the directory being taken up with this familiar patronymic, the young man won his bet in fine style.

H. E.

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"Thrust Two!"

A trooper of the Lancers, who had joined the regiment just previously to its being ordered to the front, was severely injured in the squadron's first engagement.

After recovering, his comrades asked him what he thought of the Boers as fighters.

"Fighters," he said, "they can't fight. Why they don't even know the sword exercise. I gave my man 'guard one,' and the blooming idiot gave me 'thrust two,' and if it had not been for my cocoa tin he would have finished me!" T. M.

Different Without the Carpet.

"Good gracious, Will, how on earth can you work in a small room like this. Why——"

"Well, it's comfortable enough, isn't it?"

"Yes, it's comfortable, but still I can't understand a man being able to spend his days in the space of a rabbit-hutch."

"No? Well, I manage to do so very conveniently since the carpet was taken away. Then the room seemed to be very small and crowded, but I can see no cause to complain now!" T. P.

Much Impressed.

Some persons never can make an investment in any article of apparel without finding an excuse for calling everybody's attention to it. Occasionally this proceeding meets with a merited rebuke.

"What do you think of that pair of shoes for 9s. 6d.?" asked a man of this sort, exhibiting his latest purchase to a friend.

"I think there is a good deal of leather for the money," replied his friend, walking round him in a wide circle, and looking at the shoes with profound astonishment. C. H.

Worse than Needles.

The other evening Mrs. Kennedy was dressed and ready to go to the party at Mrs. Lane's, when Mr. K. came in wearing a beaming smile, and carrying a small package in his hand.

"I have a little surprise for you, my dear," he said; "a lovely present."

"Oh, how nice!"

"Something original, too, my dear—altogether original. It's an ornament for the hair. Just sit down and let me arrange it. Now shut your eyes until I tell you to look in the glass."

"Oh, how kind of you, Charles! I was wishing I had something that would astonish those stuck-up Lanes."

"It'll just paralyse the whole lot," said Kennedy, working away among his wife's tresses. "You remember reading about that countess who is making such a sensation wearing a live beetle?"

"Yes, indeed; is it something alive? How delightful!"

"Well, this beats a beetle hollow. It's just the sweetest little live mouse——"

The impression gained by the neighbours just then was that a keg of gunpowder or something had exploded in the Kennedy mansion; and as that gentleman has since circulated a report that he had cut himself badly by being thrown out of a dog-cart, it is fair to suppose his experiment in jewellery failed. E. A. F.

The Law of Self-Preservation.

Some time ago a small pleasure yacht sprang a leak just off the coast of Yarmouth, and gradually began to sink. Suddenly a man was seen to dive off into the sea and swim to the shore, dashing in again immediately afterwards, and swimming back to the boat.

Climbing on board he gasped: "Where is my wife?" and on finding where she was managed to take her safely ashore.

A short time afterwards one of the boat's party asked him why on earth he did not take his wife with him to shore in the first instance.

"My dear sir," the philosopher quietly replied, "I was bound to save myself first. Do you think that I could forget the fact that self-preservation is the highest law of Nature?" C. R.

The Wrong License.

A brawny Swede visited a registrar's office the other day to procure a marriage license, and a couple of clerks to whom he innocently stated his wishes directed him to the department where dog licenses are issued. He approached the license window diffidently, gave his name and address, and asked what the document would cost.

"It will cost you 7s. 6d. a year for every dog you keep," replied the clerk.

"Dog?" echoed the Swede.

"Why, certainly," continued the clerk. "Don't you want a dog license?"

"Val, no," cried the would-be benedict. "Ay kaint afford to buy a dog dees year. Ay want to get only a wife now." M. T. B.

Found.

Fond Mother: "If that boy of mine has any particular bent, I can't find it."

Guardian: "What experiments have you made to find out?"

Fond Mother: "Very thorough ones. I gave him a toy printing press, a steam-engine, a box of paints, a chest of tools, and a lot of other things carefully selected to find out whether his tastes were literary, mechanical, artistic, commercial, or what, and I know no more than I did before."

Guardian: "What did he do with them?"

Fond Mother: "Smashed them all up."

Guardian: "Ah! I see. He is to be a furniture remover." A. J.

The Smartest Boy.

A boy of six years, who attends a private school where prizes are given on every sort of provocation, but hitherto had never earnt a prize, came home one afternoon and exhibited proudly one of these rewards of merit.

"Good!" said his mother; "but how did you gain it?"

"I was first in natural history."

"Natural history at your age? How did that happen?"

"Oh, they asked me how many legs a horse had."

"And what did you say?"

"I said five."

"But a horse hasn't five legs, child."

"I know; but all the other boys said six." W. W J.

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THE GOOD WOMAN'S BIT.

It was the year known as the "Black Forty Seven," so eventful in Irish history, as marking one of its saddest pages by reason of the awful visitation of famine. The poor inhabitants' staple means of subsistence was the favourite "pratie," and with Celtic light-heartedness they were content to live from hand to mouth, with no other resource, solely dependent on the hazards of one crop.

Various warnings from America had come to show that a mysterious blight was at work there. But it was unheeded, for at home the harvest had never promised better.

Alas, within one week the aspect changed, the blight appeared and spread with great rapidity and even the tubers which appeared free from it rotted during the winter months in the pits.

At next harvest the same story was told, and then, alas! began a time, the sadness of which would harrow the most hardened. The poor creatures died by thousands of famine or, fever, and all efforts seemed powerless to relieve a tithe of the suffering.

On a summer's evening in the year we speak of a lady was strolling down one of the terraced walks of the far-famed Dara Manor, in the lovely vale so justly celebrated—though under a different name—by the Irish poet, Gerald Griffin. The scene around her was fairy-like in the extreme—Buddha himself in his guarded youth could not have been more carefully shut off from scenes of sorrow. There seemed no serpent in this paradise, and few could have guessed the scenes of woe that were so close. But alas! the lady knew. Her sweet face expressed deep sadness and anxious thought.

By a sudden impulse she left her sequestered walk and went on towards the village. On the roadside stood a little cabin, with its tumble down thatched roof, its one window, and its primitive chimney. But, alas! no grunt was heard from the family pig, no fugitive hens ran in and out of the doorway. There was the little potato field, but the crop was shrivelled and blackened, and, sitting gazing at it was the saddest sight of all—the cotter and his row of little children, with their wretched, pinched faces, seated on the fence gazing at that miserable plot—the cause of all their misery. They seemed quite stupid, and it went to the heart of the lady—or as her title was, the Countess Duncairn—to see no little begging gesture from the children, no token of the recognition of her presence.

She went into the house. The earthen floor was bare, the remains of a turf fire still smouldered there, but there was no sign of food. A few cracked and empty cups were lying about. There was no bed, nothing to distinguish it as a human habitation. She went up to the man and addressed him.

He did not answer.

She then spoke to the wife in a bright tone, but she only shook her head. All hope, all life seemed to have left them.

Pressing a coin into one of the children's hands she passed on and came to the gate of the parish workhouse. There heartrending scenes were taking place.

A poor widow was before the door, and the kind-hearted mistress of the work-house was herself talking to her and trying to induce her to go in. But when she realised that she would be separated from her children if they entered, she preferred to beg with them. But, alas, others had tried that, and were now compelled to give in and submit to separation. There an old married couple might be seen taking an eternal farewell of each other before being conducted to their separate places of abode—here a whole family were saying good-bye. Too well they knew the over-crowded workhouse and the consequent fever which was rife there would soon send them to a life whose partings are unknown.

The Countess turned whiter and whiter, and wended her steps homewards. It was such scenes as these that had saddened her and brought lines of care upon her brow. The worst of all to her was the terrible fact that she could do so little to relieve all that awful want and suffering. Yes, though a countess, the wife of one who owned broad lands and a lordly mansion, she had little to give.

True it was that these lands were heavily encumbered through the extravagance of ancestors, but being crippled for money that way did not fret her—that was unavoidable. But the Earl, though he doted on his wife, had the idea that she was foolishly lavish except where she herself was concerned. He always had the fear—so fully realised in our day—that the value of landed property would go down, and his descendants left beggars. He thought the people ought to suffer for their improvidence, and be satisfied with what moderate help he could give them without fear of impoverishing his family. The slightest whim for her own personal gratification was gratified almost before it had birth, but on the subject of giving away he was inexorable.

"My dear," he would say, "I give away all I can

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afford in justice to ourselves and those who will come after us, and it is useless to ask me for more. Anything you want for yourself we can afford, and you know you have only to mention it."

And she knew that, and that knowledge was all she had to rely on, but how to utilise it was the problem. She had long ago given away any personal belongings or the value of whatever she could dispose of, but in the wilds of Ireland the latter was a difficult matter, there being only a very primitive pawnbroker's in the nearest town, who had a very rudimentary idea of the value of such things as the Countess Duncairn would be likely to wish to get rid of.

But a bright idea struck my lady at last, and she set to work it out.

Her health at the time was far from strong, and if possible the Earl was more than ever on the watch to gratify every caprice, particularly any fancy connected with her appetite. That evening at dinner she helped herself to the various dishes, but after every course her plate went away with the food untasted. As the Earl noticed her total want of appetite he grew desperately unhappy, and pressed each dish on her attention.

"Do try that entrée, it surely ought to make you eat," or "Taste that soufflet, let it tempt you," and so on, but each time she only shook her head, and said "I don't care for any of the things I see here."

"Is there anything at all you can think of, or have the slightest fancy for?"

"Nothing, nothing," she added, mournfully.

So it went on. Next day her appetite was equally bad, and her husband's spirits grew lower.

"My darling," he remonstrated, "this is not right. You can't live on air, and your health is very precious. Do try and tell me of something."

And so he continued pressing and entreating her, till at last she said:

"There's one thing, but it's an impossibility, I know."

"Impossible!" said he, indignantly, "how could it be?"

But for a long time still she would not tell, till at last she said:

"My old nurse always told me that if one's appetite failed there was one thing would tempt it."

"And that is?—" said he.

"Well," she answered, "it's a little grisley bone in the centre of a leg of mutton, but it's only a tiny thing, and it would take a dozen such to make enough for one person; and that would be ridiculous."

"Not for my wife," returned the Earl, and turning to the butler he desired him to send at once for Mickey Curran, the steward, who shortly afterwards arrived and was ordered in.

"Mickey," said his master, "my lady has taken a fancy for something in particular to eat, and she must have it."

"Begorra she must, me lord. Would it be one o' my missus's chickens? There's only a few left, for sorra an egg we could spare from the poor childer, an' heartbreakin' 'tis to see them starving in the ditches."

His lordship's face fell.

"No, Mickey, it's from my own farm it must come Let six sheep be killed to-night, and the same number every day till further orders."

Mickey's face lengthened and assumed a horrified expression. He looked at his master in a frightened manner, as if he thought he were out of his senses, then gave a side glance at the butler (whose face expressed exactly the same ideas) then at the Countess; but she never raised her eyes.

Depression was expressed in every feature, and even in the very pose of her figure.

"There," said he to himself, "it's she that's gone clane mad. Why it's like the haythen sacrifices of old. But, my lord," he at last got out, "six sheep *every* day?"

"Yes, half a dozen sheep every day; you have heard me quite correctly."

"But your lordship, those at the farm won't last."

"Well aren't there plenty on the mountains? Send men out to-morrow to drive them all in. Only see my orders carried out. You can go."

Mickey speechlessly made his bow, and, with a half-uttered "But, my lord," withdrew.

Next morning the housekeeper came to her mistress to say that an extraordinary mistake had been made, and six sheep sent in for dinner, but the Countess assured her it was no mistake, and explained where the desired bit was to be found to tempt her delicate appetite, and then ordered Mickey to be sent to her.

"Mickey," said she, when he appeared, "there'll be a good deal left after I have had my dinner off the six sheep."

"Begorra, there will, your ladyship, six sheep! Why 'tis a thing unknowns."

"Mickey," she continued, "let the rest be given away daily to those most in want. You know who they are."

Mickey's eyes clouded over, and deep emotion stirred him. Like a flash he understood it all. He knew the master well, and he could enter into the problem the wife had solved.

"God bless you for ever and ever for an angel from Heaven. You'll have the prayers of the poor——"

He could say no more, and hurried from her presence.

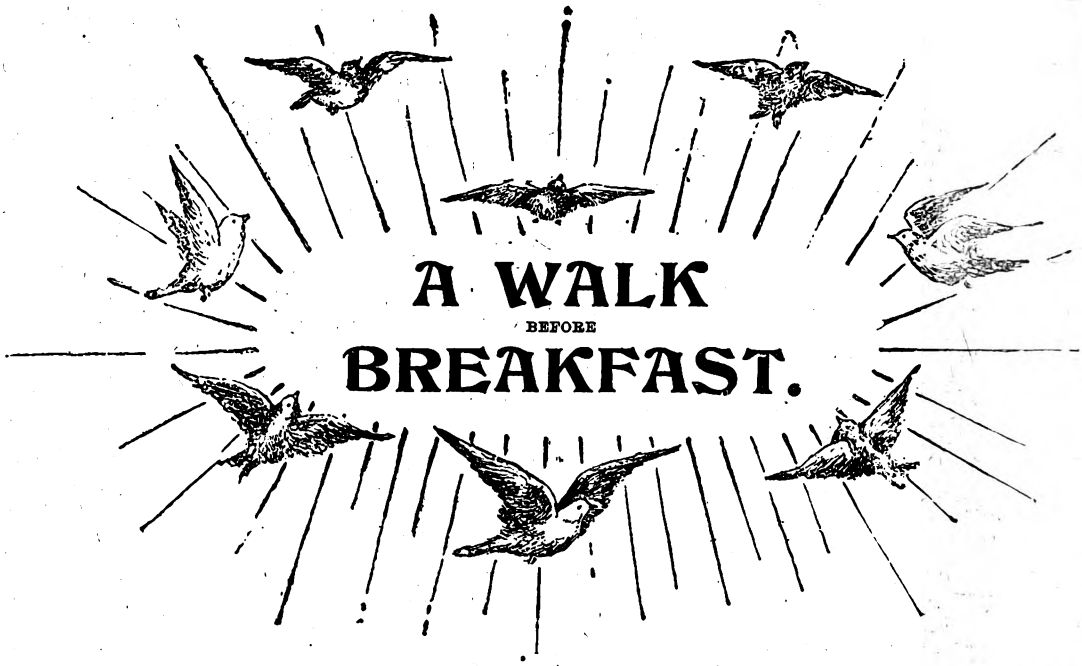
* * * * *

History does not relate whether the Earl ever showed any consciousness of the real cause of his wife's strange fancy, nor how long that fancy lasted. But it is remembered in that part of Ireland, the name of the "Good Woman's Bit" being still applied to the little bone in a leg of mutton answering to the knee-cap in the human frame.

These little bones were collected through the efforts of the faithful Mickey, and handed over to the care of the parish priest, who, when better times enabled the poor people to contribute their willing aid, had the floor of a little side chapel of the Roman Catholic church paved with them.

There they are to this day, and when the grateful peasants kneel on that pavement and offer up their pious petitions, the name of one saint—though not found in the calander—is never forgotten.

T. S.



A WALK BEFORE BREAKFAST.

He hadn't slept soundly. He rarely slept soundly now.

It wasn't his age, surely, he was only fifty-seven; and it couldn't be his financial affairs, for all his investments were sound and highly remunerative, and his large business was rapidly increasing.

No, he must look for the cause elsewhere.

Perhaps it would be well to consult a doctor.

He rose, and lighting the gas looked at his watch.

It was half-past four. He went to a window that faced the east and raised the sash.

The air came in cool, and fragrant.

Low down on the distant horizon streaks of pale light were beginning to show.

"I'll see this sunrise," said Philip Branstone, the great manufacturer. "I haven't seen one since I was a boy."

He hastily dressed himself and washed his face and hands.

"I'll see it from the outside," he added, and softly creeping down stairs found his hat, and opening the great door descended the stone steps that led to the broad street.

As he faced the east and moved slowly along the finest avenue in this provincial town he sniffed the air and found it good. He even took off his hat and let it cool his head.

"It certainly seems to me that this is better than tossing on that comfortless mattress," he muttered. "Wonder why I never thought of it before."

The pale streaks in the east grew broader, a pink flush rose behind the great factories in the distance, the clouds became hazy. Swiftly the flush deepened, spokes of light were flung upwards, and then came the sun.

Philip Branstone walked slowly onward eagerly watching these magic changes.

"Oh," he said, "that's fine! It's worth the trouble. How many people know anything about it? Precious few. Look at the present audience. One restless, lonely old man, and a night watchman or two. What a shame!"

He came to a cross road and paused to look at his watch.

"Quarter after five," he muttered. "No. I'll not go home. I feel like a runaway boy. I'll stroll down across the fields to the river. I don't believe I've really been along the river side for a dozen years."

He walked at a leisurely gait, breathing in the "tonicy" air and ever and anon turning his gaze on the sun-tinted clouds. His eyes were brighter, and his step more elastic. He seemed to grow younger as he advanced. Labouring men, going to their work through the fields, swinging their dinner baskets, looked round as they passed him.

His was an unusual figure at that early hour. Once he heard a man repeat his name to his companions and they all stared curiously at him as they passed.

As he came within sight of the river a girl came down the road and turned in on the pathway just ahead of him.

She was a girl of perhaps fourteen, rather slender, with a clear olive complexion and thick dark hair. She was neatly dressed, although her shoes were dingy and frayed, and in her hand she carried a basket whose contents were concealed beneath a white paper.

Philip Branstone quickened his steps a little.

"You are an early riser," he said to the girl.

At the moment he was interested in early risers.

"Yes, sir," said the girl, who showed no surprise at his abrupt remark. "I have to rise early to carry my father's breakfast to him. He is a helper at the foundry over there."

She pointed to a long row of dingy buildings not far ahead.

She spoke well and with a lack of constraint that the old man admired.

"Why doesn't your father come home to his breakfast?" he asked.

"He goes to work at midnight and leaves off at noon," she answered.

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"And how far do you come?"

"About a mile and a half."

She gave him a little nod and turned to cross a vacant field that would save her a few steps. Philip watched her for a moment as she sturdily stepped forward.

"A good little woman, and her father should be proud of her. I hope he is."

He sighed softly as he plodded on.

He enjoyed his walk along the river side—the rush of the water being very soothing, and he could not resist kicking in some pebbles as he walked along.

Presently he turned and strolled leisurely towards the iron works. Almost in a moment he came upon the girl of the lunch-basket.

She was sitting on a low pile of boards and close beside sat a working man, bare armed and sinewy; a swarthy man with small, black eyes, and a short black beard. He was eating, with evident enjoyment, the breakfast the girl had brought him. Philip Branstone paused at the picture. It pleased him. He nodded smilingly to the girl, who nodded back, and when the swarthy man looked up he nodded to him, too.

Philip leaned against the pile of timber.

"Your load will be lighter on the way back," he said to the girl.

"Yes," she answered, "father always has a good appetite."

The working man looked up. He nodded gravely to Philip.

"She's a good girl," he slowly said. "Comes a long way."

"Yes," said Philip. "I'm sure she's a very good girl."

The dark man looked round at the object of his praise. There was fondness in his glance.

"Smart girl, too," he said. "Teacher says she's the brightest girl in school."

He said this with some difficulty, but with evident gratification.

"Oh, father!" cried the child, with a swift little blush.

Then the swarthy man's rough voice grew softer.

"She's all I've got," he said.

"I see," said Philip Branstone.

"Her mother, brother, and sister are dead. Only Lena is left to me."

He turned a little and softly stroked the girl's hand.

Something rose in the rich man's throat and a mist swam before his eyes.

The swarthy man smilingly looked his child over from hat to shoes. When he reached the shoes he scowled.

"Bad shoes," he said. "Bad shoes!"

The girl turned to Philip Branstone.

"Father thinks I should wear my best shoes," she explained. "He doesn't know how fast this walk would wear them out."

"Best shoes," echoed the work man; "yes, yes; best shoes."

He looked at Philip Branstone. Then he softly touched the girl's shoulder with a forefinger and struck himself sharply on the forearm and chest.

"She's what I work for," he smilingly said.

"I must go," remarked Philip Branstone hurriedly. He paused and stepped forward. "I would like to shake hands with you," he said to the man, who met the advancing fingers with a warm grasp.

Philip nodded to the girl and strode away.

There was an early tram waiting the signal to start. He jumped in and twenty minutes later opened the front door of his house.

The housekeeper met him in the hall. Her anxious face cleared.

"Glad you have returned, Mr. Branstone," she said. "We were beginning to worry a little over your unusual absence."

"Out for an early stroll, Mrs. Collinson," he said. "Kindly have breakfast ready in half an hour."

He stepped into the library and opened his desk. For a moment he sat in deep thought. Then he rapidly indicted this letter:

"My Dear Nellie,—I find it is quite impossible to hold out any longer. I am growing old and I need you, dear child. The door from which I turned you two long, long years ago is open for you and yours. You are all I have in the world, dear. Without you the house is cold and desolate. For what have I been toiling all these years but for you? Come back to me, daughter, and all will be forgiven and forgotten. Tell your husband that a hearty hand clasp awaits him. Say to him that I confess that I sorely misjudged him.

"Write to me, dear, as soon as you receive this, and tell me when to expect you and Fred.

"Your affectionate father,

"Philip Branstone."

He looked at the letter when he had finished it and shook his head. Then he carefully read it through. Again he showed his disapproval.

After a moment or two he raised the sheet and deliberately tore it to bits of jagged paper and tossed them into the waste basket.

"Pshaw," he smilingly muttered, "that's too slow. I'll hurry down and wire to Nellie that I'm coming for them, and then I'll follow by the first train."

The housekeeper stood in the doorway.

"Breakfast is ready, Mr. Branstone," she announced.

The rich man whirled towards her.

"Mrs. Collinson," he said, "I want you to put Nellie's rooms into the nicest possible order at once."

The housekeeper started.

"Is Miss Nellie coming home, sir?" she eagerly asked.

"Yes," said Philip Branstone, "she's coming home."

W. R. Rose.

TOWARDS PRETORIA.

By Julian Ralph.

JUST PUBLISHED. ***PRICE 6s.***

BOUND IN KHAKI AND SCARLET.

A Record of the War to the Capture of Bloemfontein.

Among the many gifted correspondents at the seat of war none has made a better name for the brilliance and vividness of his letters than Julian Ralph, of *The Daily Mail*. He has made excellent use of the material gathered on the field of action, and produced this fascinating story of the war.

AT ALL BOOKSELLERS.

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Our Boer Philosopher and Friend.

It was just before the general exodus began. A few of us saw what was about to happen in the Transvaal. We had lived there a few years with our eyes open to what was going on: indeed, it would have been difficult to close our eyes to it, for the Boers did it pretty openly. Guns, ammunition, rifles and ambulance requisites seemed to be the chief imports; then men were being constantly drilled in all kinds of out-of-the-way places. There were not two opinions on the subject. The burghers meant fighting; there was only one nation they could fight, and that was England. When Mr. Secretary Chamberlain formulated his demands, we put up the shutters, sold everything we had, while a price was still obtainable, and set our faces towards the south. There were two besides myself. Jack Fenwick, the under-manager of a mine just outside Pretoria and my partner in the coal trade, George Manby. We agreed to travel together.

A number of our friends came to the station to see us off, and drink our health in the various poisonous concoctions served out at the Pretoria refreshment room.

There was a considerable amount of banter as we took our seats in a first class carriage of the Orange Free State express and a big cheer went up as we steamed out of the station.

The Trunk Line connecting Cape Colony with the Transvaal enters the Free State at Norval's Pont and runs *via* Bloemfontein to Viljoen's Drift on the Vaal River. From Pretoria to the Drift is a run of perhaps a hundred miles. We had exhausted the newspapers, as well as our stock of conversation by the time we reached Viljoen, and Fenwick proposed that we should keep a look out, when we stopped, for a man to make a fourth at whist, our favourite game. We played this in preference to nap, euchre, or casino, the more popular games, because we were not fond of gambling, though we always played for small sums.

As the train drew up, we rushed to the refreshment room more from habit than from want of anything, but somehow one looks singular out there, sitting in a carriage when there is a bar near. There were not many people about; things then, owing to the gloomy outlook, were very slack. We saw no one whom we knew, and, being careful men, were not anxious to play with strangers. However, on our return, we found a seat had been taken by some one, for there was a big carpet bag of an old world pattern deposited on the cushions immediately opposite me. The owner came up a few seconds afterwards. He was a big cadaverous-looking chap who might be a parson or Sunday school superintendent or something of that sort. . . .

"Let's have dummy whist," said Manby, as the train started again. We agreed, and for the next half hour tried to think that it was real sport, but when I had revoked twice and tried to appropriate three tricks belonging to our opponents, we inclined to the belief that dummy whist was not all that had been claimed for it. Up to this point the stranger had maintained a cold reserve that evidently signified no wish to join in the game, but as we laid down the cards, he so far thawed as to inquire whether a fourth would add any interest to the game.

We responded at once. We cut for partners, the stranger falling to me, at which my companions winked significantly, thinking that I had got a bad bargain. However, as it happened, he proved to have a good knowledge of the game and before we had played half an hour, he proved himself an old hand at it. He produced a box of Havanas from his old bag. "I cannot smoke and play," he said. "So suppose we have a yarn. We can resume our play when the cigars are finished." He was no great talker, but he certainly was a good listener and before long he was acquainted with all our affairs. Manby was fool enough to tell him that he had over five hundred pounds in his pocket book. Of course we were not to be outdone, so we let him know that our purses were comfortably lined.

From his old carpet bag he produced a bottle of choice Scotch which he handed round with an invitation to help ourselves, which we did. This seemed to loosen our tongues still more.

"You will pardon advice that is kindly meant, won't you?" he began insinuatingly after a pull at the whisky.

"Certainly," we hastened to say.

"Well, you are young men, I could give each of you twenty years, that must be my excuse for preaching. But do you not consider it very indiscreet to talk of your money to a complete stranger. How do you know but what I may be a robber, there are plenty of them about?"

"Ah, yes, but there are three of us," we answered.

"Yes; and I might have a Mauser revolver handy for emergencies. What could you do against that?"

We looked foolish in our attempts to appear unconcerned.

"I suppose you never thought of buying a weapon with part of your cash."

"N-no!" we murmured.

"Exactly," he went on. "It is the way with you English; you are always so cocksure of your safety. Now suppose we resume our cards," and he began to shuffle, "but in future, take my advice, travel armed, you will live to thank me. Your political views are wonderfully accurate," he continued as he dealt the

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cards. "There will be war as sure as nuggets are nuggets. I am a member of the Government myself and can confirm what you say. Chamberlain must give way or be licked. Diamonds are trumps."

"Clubs will be trumps in the game that is about to open," I ventured by way of a joke, though joking is not my strong point.

"Well, if by clubs you mean what has taken their place, the burghers hold a good hand," was his response.

About twenty minutes later the train slowed down and presently stopped. Our acquaintaince got up, opened the window and gazed out into the night.

"We stop a few minutes here to take up water," he remarked. "Suppose we open the door and get a little more air in."

I nodded without looking up, for Manby had just dealt and we were sorting our cards. When I did look up I got a shock. The Boer was standing in the doorway covering us with two business-looking revolvers of the latest pattern.

"My friends, I gave you some advice a short while ago and I hope you appreciated it. So that you may value it at its proper price in the future I will trouble you to obey me with alacrity. Experience has to be bought, and you are going to buy it of me. "You—and he pointed his weapon at me—"put out your purse and all your valuables on this seat," which he indicated with the other revolver.

There was no mistaking the tone of his command. "Make haste," he added, as I looked from one companion to the other. "We shall shoot a lot of you soon. I may anticipate matters if you are not——quick."

I hurriedly laid out my possessions.

"Now you," and he pointed his murderous pistol at Manby, who did not hesitate for a moment. Purses, pocket-books, watches, some odd gold and silver in a few seconds were laid in a heap on the seat.

"Now, about face, turn!" he ordered us. "I mean you to look out of the other window. I will shoot the first man who dares to turn round before I give him permission. Keep perfectly still."

I knew he was stuffing our valuables into his pocket.

"The bag and the cards I leave with you," he went on, "and I believe there is still a little whisky left in the bottle to which you are welcome. But more valuable of all is my last advice to you. Never travel without your Mauser, next to that, a Colt. They do not occupy much room and they enable you to take a more prominent part in any argument that may crop up."

He continued in this strain until the train began to move, then we heard him bang the door, and we ventured to look round. He was gone and with him what valuables we had carried on our persons.

The three of us rushed to the communication to stop the train. It seemed as if the driver would never pull up, but after about a quarter of an hour's delay, the guard came along to whom we all in the same breath began to tell our story.

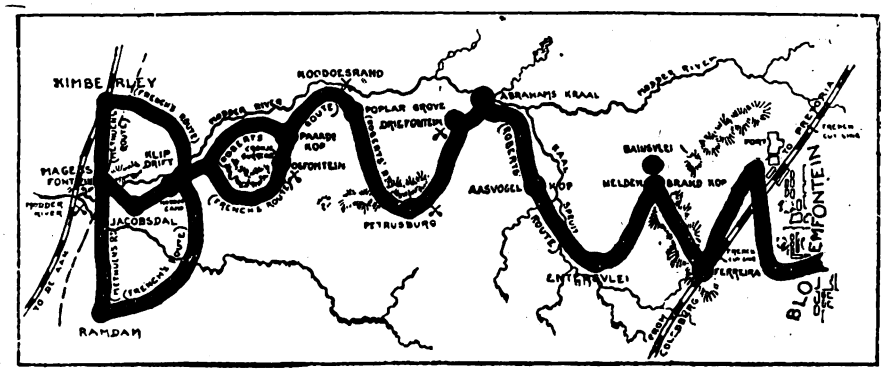
"One at a time, gentlemen," he remarked gruffly.

I acted as spokesman.

"Umph!" he said. "You must report it at the next station."

This was all the satisfaction we ever got, and I heard more unkind language from my two friends on that one journey than I had heard during all the years I had known them.

Athol Forbes.



How Lord Roberts spells BOVRIL

Careful examination of this Map will show that the route followed by Lord Roberts in his historical march to Kimberley and Bloemfontein has made an indelible imprint of the word Bovril on the face of the Orange Free State.

This extraordinary coincidence is one more proof of the universality of Bovril, which has already figured so conspicuously throughout the South African Campaign.

Whether for the soldier on the battle-field, the patient in the sick-room, the cook in the kitchen, or for those as yet in full health and strength at home,

BOVRIL IS LIQUID LIFE.

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Our Annual Begging Letter.

THE OPENING OF THE FRESH AIR FUND.

For eight years I have begged of the charity of my readers. For the ninth year I must beg also. That there is an unfortunate warfare raging at the present moment in South Africa, and that my subscribers to the Fresh Air Fund in the past have already given largely to the various funds for it, will not, I hope, be any cause why our poor little kiddies of the slums should suffer.

Please don't think about the sums you have already paid out in the cause of charity; you have been relieving the distress and suffering all through the winter months, and have had many calls upon you, but I know that you have still a tender corner for the slum children; don't let them suffer more than possible. These little ones, many of whose lives were bitter enough before, have now, perhaps, lost a parent in this terrible war, and we are doubly anxious to lift some of the clouds which gather so black and threatening round them. Surely we should do much for these mites.

I don't mind if the friends who regularly contribute, and whose consciences are therefore free, skip the next paragraph, because the working of this great scheme is well known to them.

Each child gets a day in the country with plenty of good food and drink, at a cost of ninepence. The children are selected from the very poorest districts of London and the provincial towns, irrespective of creed, and as far as we can manage, the little ones who benefit are those who would not otherwise get a holiday. There are no working expenses in connection with the movement, as these are all borne by the Ragged School Union and the proprietors of this paper. The amount subscribed goes direct to those for whom it is intended.

We select towns with a population of over 100,000 inhabitants, appoint a secretary, who, with a committee of gentleman, kindly volunteer to find the most deserving children, and, in fact, arrange everything in connection with the excursions in their particular town. These gentlemen work very hard, and their sole motive is the brightening of the children's lives.

The list of towns and the number of children whom we hope to benefit this summer are:

Aberdeen, 2,000; Birmingham, 5,000; Belfast, 3,000; Blackburn, 2,000; Bristol, 2,500; Bradford, 2,000; Bolton, 2,000; Cardiff, 2,000; Dublin, 2,500; Edinburgh, 2,000; Glasgow, 5,000; Gateshead, 2,000; Hull, 2,000; Leeds, 3,000; Leicester, 2,000; Liverpool, 5,000; London, 38,000; Manchester, 5,000; Newcastle, 2,000; Nottingham, 2,000; Oldham, 2,000; Portsmouth, 2,000; Sheffield, 3,000; Sunderland, 2,000; total, 100,000.

Of course, in order to send this number into the country we must collect during the summer months £4,050. We start the season with £252, being various amounts to hand during the winter months.

Everyone, I am sure, can undertake to pay one child's expenses. Only ninepence! just think of the happiness this will cause one youngster; and you will never miss these few coppers. Of course, we are delighted to acknowledge notes and cheques, but although all may be willing, it is not in the power of us all to give largely. Just give whatever you can, but do, please, send something. Collecting sheets will be forwarded to you on receipt of a post-card. Many collectors last summer tried to outdo their collection of the year before, and so we were able to acknowledge quite large sums from most of them.

I often wish that just for one day I could transfer my readers to one of the outings to witness the children's mad delight. If we remember certain happy events in our lives, surely to these children, many of whom have only this one ray of sunshine in the three hundred and sixty-five, it must indeed be a red-letter day.

You will remember that we fell short of the number anticipated at the beginning of last year, so we want to make a special effort to swell our little army this summer. Just put your shoulders to the wheel, and see if it cannot be managed.

Don't forget, those who cannot send a large donation from their own purse, can write for a collecting list and ask their friends to help. If you really haven't time to worry your friends, post us nine stamps to pay for one child, but please do all you can to further the object we have at heart.

I do not bother readers during the winter months, but from now until the end of September I shall keep on worrying them; ours is a good object, and that must be sufficient excuse.

Collecting sheets and full particulars will be sent on application. £8 2s. pays for a whole party of 200 children with adults to look after them, so if you feel disposed to have your own day, just send along a cheque, and let me know by what name you would like the day known. All amounts to hand will be acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly* each week.

Some idea of what The Fresh Air Fund has done during the past eight years may be gathered from the fact that no less than £22,860 15s. 1d. has been subscribed by our readers, and this magnificent sum of money has provided a day's enjoyment for 573,995 children.

Our readers may well be proud of this record, and I can only hope that the Fund will not fall short of its average during the coming season.

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£100. GIVEN AWAY

Pearson's "TALKING" PUZZLE.

THE GREATEST EDUCATIONAL PASTIME OF THE AGE.

DON'T STOP

looking at it. Buy one from your newsagent, or send to us for one and

WIN THIS PRIZE

So simple anyone can do it, and all have an equal opportunity.

PRICE 1/-. *POST FREE, 1/1½.*

From C. ARTHUR PEARSON Ltd., Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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The Brain Gymnasium.

In these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

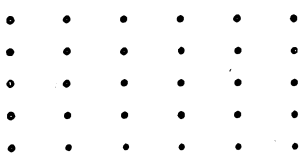
Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, Short Stories, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by Monday, April 16th, 1900.

No. 82.

I generally come from Egypt. Divide me in two parts, I become "silent" and "belonging to me."

No. 83.



Each of the above dots represents a letter, each line a word of six letters; the same letters are used in each line. Fill in the letters and make the five words, the last of which means "effect."

No. 84.

The centrals of the names of the following, when arranged in their proper order, will give the name of an English General:

A continent.
A city in the United States.
A country in Europe.
A town in Arabia.
A town in South Africa.

No. 85.

The longest line of asterisks represents the name of an English town, and the eight vertical rows represent complete words. The letters used in the whole are:

A A A A B B D E E E G H I I I M M M
N N N O P P P R R R T T T T T T U.

No. 86.

Form the name of a town in England from the first and third letters of words signifying:

Sarcasm; Courteous; To whip; A puzzle.

No. 87.

Form a square word by using the equivalents of the following:

Unhappy; Solitary; One; Measure.

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Nos. 58 to 63.

The prize of £2 has been awarded to Mr. M. Read, of "Chesterton," South Croxted Road, West Dulwich, S.E., whose solution was the first correct one dealt with.

A copy of "The Hope of the Family," by Alphonse Daudet, has been sent to each of the following:

F. Culyer, 14 Chalford Road, West Norwood, S.E.
Miss M. Brown, 7 Whitford Road, Higher Tranmere. Birkenhead.
J. M. Child, 46 Wilson Street, Derby.
A. Plentyn, Y Frou, Llangollen.
A. Ward, 10 Clive Road, Portsmouth.
J. W. Johnson, 106 Wistaston Road, Crewe.
Mrs. C. Moran, 31 York Place, Edinburgh.
Miss Ethel Grace, 45 St. George's Place, Knightsbridge, S.W.
J. Day, 79 St. Thomas's Road, Finsbury Park, N.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES

Nos. 64 to 69.

No. 64. Scar—sloe—swan—linnet—loaf—bolt; Lacrosse—Lawn-tennis; Football.

No. 65. REMBRANDT: Dram—Band—Term—Neat.

No. 66. Pare—bare—dare—fare—hare—mare—rare—tare—ware; Pear—bear—dear—fear—hear—ream—rear—tear—wear; Peat—bead—deaf—feat—heat—reap—real—team—weak.

No. 67. Lord Roberts—Afghanistan; Flag, sofa, urge, tram, done, gibe, star; Hood, sale, root, soon.

No. 68. Jessica—Shylock; JacK—EpiC—SagO—SeaL—IdlY—CasH—AidS

No. 69.
TABOO
ARENA
PETER

SHORT STORIES ADVERTISEMENT RATES.

Single column, per inch, per insertion	£0 10 0
Double " " "	1 0 0
Full page inside, facing page of matter, either white paper or 2nd or 3rd page of cover, or back page, per insertion	10 0 0
Half-page " "	5 0 0
Quarter-page " "	2 10 0
Eighth-page " "	1 5 0
Front page, whole " "	12 10 0
" half	6 5 0

All spaces above one-eighth of a page are charged at per page rate.
Series discount: 5 per cent. for 13, 10 per cent. for 26, 15 per cent. for 52 insertions.
Black blocks are charged 25 per cent. extra. All advertisements are subject to approval. All copy must be sent in by Noon on Tuesday, April **10th**, if intended for the issue on sale April **24th**, and dated April **28th**. The Proprietors reserve the right to hold over or suspend the insertion of any advertisement without prejudice to other insertions on order. All communications should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, "Pearson's Weekly" Offices, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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Made from FRESH HOME-GROWN FRUIT.

THE NEWS: "Manufactured from *freshly gathered fruit*, amid "fresh and beautiful surroundings."

HOME NOTES: "The exquisite cleanliness of the whole "process is most striking."

S. CHIVERS & SONS, Fruit Growers, Histon, Cambs.

FIRST JAMS PRIZE

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

EPPS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

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BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.

INVESTED FUNDS £10,000,000.

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.

FRANCIS RAVENSCROFT, *Manager*.

BRACELETS AND LONG NECK-CHAINS

18ct. (stamped) Rolled Gold Curb Chain Padlock Bracelets, safety chain attached, set with three lovely South African Rubies, or Opals, or other stones, 13/6. Similar Bracelet without stones, 9/6; heavier, 12/- Also long Neck-Chains, 18ct. (stamped), for watch or muff-guard, 14/6. All of very latest and most exquisite designs, and guaranteed for fifteen years. Handsome silk velvet case included with each article. Either sent on approval willingly before payment.—MORRIS, 16 HATTON GARDEN, LONDON.

EGGS

and how to use them.

See Special Supplement

GIVEN AWAY

with this week's

HOME NOTES.

The First and Best of Ladies' Papers.

ONE PENNY WEEKLY.

TOO STOUT

I was for years; by chance I came across a simple home remedy that reduced me from 17st. to 10st. 12lb., and I will willingly send particulars **free** to any sufferer enclosing stamp. Mrs. L. E. FELL, 195 Oxford Street, London W.

NOSE

MACHINES. LEES RAY, S. S. Dept., South Castle St. Liverpool, is a specialist on Ugly and Red Noses. Send stamp for particulars of his patent scientific Nose Improvers. Red Nose Cure, medically approved, 3/9. Outstanding Ear Machines, 11/6.

HAIR DESTROYED.

Send me an envelope (stamped and addressed) and I will tell you how to remove all superfluous hair **free of charge.** (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Miss E. V. (Room 3), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

SULPHOLINE LOTION,

For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

SHILLING BOTTLES.

WHY BE FAT?

When a lady, who has discovered a simple means of Self-Cure will be happy to send particulars of same to any sufferer from this distressing complaint. Free on receipt of stamped addressed envelope. ADDRESS:

Mrs. TREVOR WELLS,
63 *HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON, W.C.*

VARICOCELE.

Men who are weak and suffering from nervous exhaustion, loss of vigour, Varicocele, &c., can be successfully and permanently cured without operation or detention from business by THE DR. COLLINS most improved and rational method medical science has ever yet produced.

Particulars and proofs of successful cures sent free on receipt of address.

THE COLLINS REMEDY CO.,
Gothic House, 9 Erskine Street, Liverpool

SILVER QUEEN & ROYAL AJAX CYCLES

ON MONTHLY PAYMENTS. Enormous stock. New and second-hand. FROM 10s. MONTHLY. Carriage paid. Free wheels and rim brakes. Illustrated Price Lists Post Free.—THE SILVER QUEEN CYCLE Co. Ltd., 221 Tottenham Court Road, London, W.

ALL FAT PEOPLE

can safely **Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

Send 2s. 6d. to **THE TRILENE CO.**, Sole Proprietors, **66 Finsbury Pavement, London.**

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

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DRUNKENNESS

CURED. This can be done with or without patient's knowledge. Send me a stamp and I will tell you how. (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Mrs. C. H. (Room 8), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

JUNO CYCLES FOR LADIES & CENTS.

THE VERY BEST.
FREE or FIXED WHEELS
The most up-to-date.
Carriage Paid.

Discount for Cash.

LISTS POST FREE

		Monthly.
£8 10s.	...	14/2
£11 11s.	...	19/3
£12	...	20/-
£12 12s.	...	21/-
£14 14s.	...	24/6

Write for New Season's List. **JUNO** Cycles and Accessories (over 100 pages) sent Post Free.

JUNO	...	£10	... 16/8 monthly.
Lady Safety	...	£11	... 18/4 monthly.

Fatherly Hard Wood Cycle Stand, 2/6. Handlebar Basket, 1/-

METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS CO. LTD., Juno Cycle School, and Works, 75, 76 Bishopsgate Street Without E.C., and Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

VARICOCELE.

Every man suffering from Varicocele and the allied troubles, should send for treatise, describing their Causes, Symptoms, Results, and Successful and Painless Treatment without surgical operation or the use of cumbersome trusses and electrical appliances. Will be sent sealed, post free, three stamps.

S. S. MURRAY,
7 Southampton Row, London, W.C.

THE ONLY EFFICACIOUS SUBSTITUTE FOR COD LIVER OIL.

DEVONSHIRE CREAM

(REALLY GENUINE.)

IN PATENT AIR-TIGHT TINS.

½lb., 1s. 4d.; 1lb., 2s. 4d.; 2lb. 4s

INCLUDING TIN AND POSTAGE.

Mrs. Conyers,

MORCHARD BISHOP, DEVON.

A MAGNIFICENT COMPLEXION GUARANTEED

By the free use of LILLIE POWDER. It nourishes, heals, soothes, and brings Health and Beauty.

Prepared from the original recipe invented by Mrs. Langtry, under the strict supervision of Her Majesty's Perruquier, Mr. W. Clarkson.

Order it of your Chemist and refuse all substitutes, as they may be injurious.

Three Tints: Blanche Naturelle, and Rachel. Of all Chemists, Hairdressers, Stores, &c.

THE LILLIE SYNDICATE,
Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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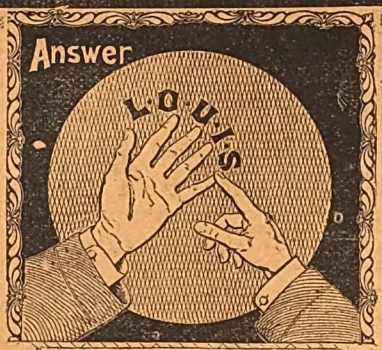
VELVETEEN?



FIVE LETTERS ONLY.

Don't Forget this when you buy.

EVERY YARD IS STAMPED

L-O-U-I-S.

"OROCO"
TABLE MATS

Consisting of 6 Plate sizes, 2 Meat Dish, and 2 Vegetable Dish.
AN ELEGANT TABLE DECORATION. A PERFECT PROTECTION FROM HOT DISHES & PLATES.

"OROCO" Manufacturing Co., WIGAN.

10 FOR ONE SHILLING POST FREE.

"OROCO" Manufacturing Co., WIGAN.

"OROCO SOX"

Keep the feet dry and prevent fatigue.

18 PAIRS for 1s.

ZEBRA

Grate Polish

No Hard Work.

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WHY 100,000 PEOPLE LEFT BIRMINGHAM. See this week's PEARSON'S WEEKLY

SHORT STORIES

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN

No. 589. FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 14TH, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

The Universal Medicine. **BEECHAM'S PILLS** Worth A Guinea a Box.

Beecham's Pills
Cure Bilious and Nervous Disorders.

Beecham's Pills
Cure Constipation and Sick Headache.

Beecham's Pills
Ensure proper Assimilation of Food.

Beecham's Pills
Arouse Sluggish and Torpid Livers and Dispel Bile.

Beecham's Pills
Cure Stomachic Troubles, such as Indigestion, Want of Appetite, Dyspepsia, Fulness after Meals, Vomitings, Sickness at the Stomach, &c.

Beecham's Pills
Give almost instant relief.

Beecham's Pills
Cure Restlessness and Insomnia, and give sound and refreshing sleep.

Beecham's Pills
Are suitable for both young and old.

Beecham's Pills
Will make you look well, feel well, and keep well.

KHAKI

IS FASHIONABLE

but it does not follow that Khaki-coloured eyes give you a military bearing. They are, however, unmistakable evidence that your liver and stomach are in a sadly disordered state. The wisest thing to do under the circumstances, is to

SURRENDER YOURSELF UNCONDITIONALLY

to the kindly rule of Beecham's Pills, which will soon restore to your eyes their naturally clear, bright, healthy appearance — free from khaki.

Beecham's Pills
Purify the Blood, and Remove Scurvy, Pimples, and Blotches on the Skin.

Beecham's Pills
Remove wind and Pains in the Stomach.

Beecham's Pills
Are the most reliable family medicine, and should be kept in every home.

Beecham's Pills
Lay the foundation of Good Health.

Beecham's Pills
Improve the Complexion, and restore the "rose-bud of health" to pallid cheeks.

Beecham's Pills
Assist the kidneys to perform their special functions.

Beecham's Pills
If taken in time will ward off many a serious illness.

Beecham's Pills
Have stood the test of over fifty years.

Beecham's Pills Sold Everywhere.

OVER 6,000,000 BOXES SOLD ANNUALLY.

Beecham's Pills In Boxes, 1/1½ and 2/9 containing 56 and 168 pills respectively.

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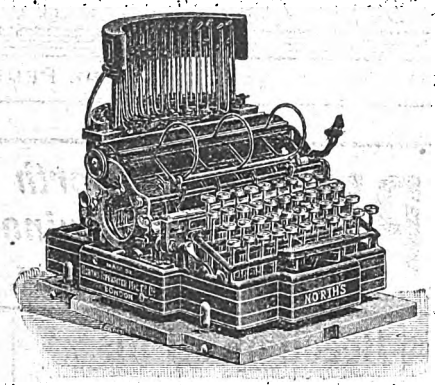
THE PREMIER MACHINE OF ENGLISH MAKE.



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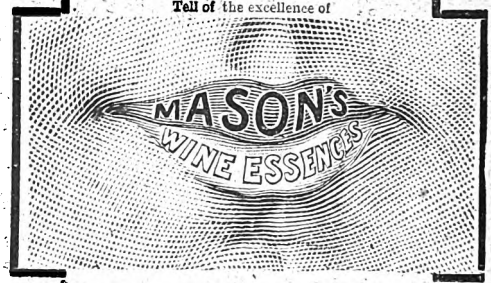
27a LEADENHALL STREET, LONDON, E.C.
35 TITHEBARN STREET, LIVERPOOL.

THOUSANDS OF LIPS

Tell of the excellence of



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NON-INTOXICATING.

MASON'S WINE ESSENCES become famous wherever they go. They are pronounced The Ideal by all who try them.

6D. BOTTLE makes **60 GLASSES** of the most Delicious Wine. Exquisite flavour and absolute purity. Suitable for all ages. Sample Bottle, post free, 9 stamps.

MASON'S COFFEE ESSENCE is recognised everywhere as the standard of purity. Have you tried it?

NEWBALL & MASON, NOTTINGHAM.
Makers of MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS.
Agents Wanted.

HAIR DESTROYED.

Send me an envelope (stamped and addressed) and I will tell you how to remove all superfluous hair **free of charge.** (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Miss E. V. (Room 3), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

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S. S. MURRAY,
7 Southampton Row, London, W.C.

ROSY CHEEKS

and a lovely complexion, skin clear as Alabaster, produced by one box of **Dr. LENNOX'S Harmless Arsenic Wafers,** the only cure for Pimples, Blackheads, Sallow or Greasy Skins, no matter how bad. Price per box, privately packed with Medical and Analytical Reports by Dr. Griffiths and Granville Sharpe, F.C.S., 2/6 post free. H. LENNOX, 21 Electric Avenue, Brixton, London. Absolutely harmless to the most delicate. Thousands of testimonials.

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JUNO CYCLES FOR LADIES AND GENTS.

FREE OR FIXED WHEELS.

THE VERY BEST.
Carriage Paid. Discount for Cash.

	Monthly
£8 10s.	14/2
£10 10s.	17/6
£12	20/-
£12 12s.	21/-
£14 14s.	24/6
£15 15s.	26/3

Road Racer ... £10 0s. 16s. 8d. Mon'h'y. Light Roadster, £10 10s. 17s. 6d. Monthly. Season's List of JUNO Cycles and Accessories, over 100 pages, sent post free. Scorcher Brake, 1/-; Standard Cyclometer, 10,000 miles, 1/10.
METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS CO. Ltd.
Juno Cycle School & Works, 75, 76, Bishopsgate Street, Without, E.C., and Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

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THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

EPPS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

SEVEN PRIZE MEDALS.

Those series of pens neither scratch nor spurt. They glide over the roughest paper with the ease of a soft lead pencil. An assorted sample box for 7 stamps from the works, Birmingham.

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane London.

INVESTED FUNDS

£10,000,000.

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.

FRANCIS RAVENSCROFT, *Manager.*

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EASTER BANK-HOLIDAY NUMBER.

No. 389.] [Week Ending April 14, 1900.

UNDER THE KOPJE.

A Story of Early Days in South Africa.

THE guard over the convicts who worked on the village roads looked up from the work wearily. He removed his broad felt hat and brushed the sweat from his reddened brow and his cheeks and neck, sunburnt almost to blackness. His Kaffir charges halted in their task, and their gaze followed his.

In the clearly-bright African air the threatening grey stone walls of the strong gaol, built commandingly on a high, big-bouldered kopje, looked close at hand, although a good mile away. Vryburg, the tiny capital of the British territory, lay to the left, hill-bound, silent, street deserted in the furnace heat, two rows of glaring houses with roofs and walls of galvanized iron.

Suddenly a quick-eyed Kaffir cried: "Ba-ors!" and pointed to the flagstaff in front of the gaol. With a grunt of relief the white man swung his rifle to his shoulder, and the Kaffirs threw their tools into the wheelbarrows. There fluttered up the head of the flagstaff a red flag, the sign to all outside working parties to return. But to-day work ceased at four o'clock, and the convicts were not marched directly to the gaol, but to a small lake beneath the kopje, where, twice a week they laved themselves. An instant change took place in the manner of the prisoners. They joked as they left their barrows in a shed, and trotted forward so quickly as to inconvenience their warder. A big, glossy, black man, his fine figure concealed by the prison clothes led the way, humming as he went, in low, sing-song, pleasant melody, a chant of war times. The others took it up; one threw his hands above his head, and skipped a step of the war dance.

"Easy, Sixpence!" growled the guard. "Easy, you big rascal!"

The big Kaffir in the lead slowed up, and turned with a grin to the white man, pointing a finger down a great red throat.

"Ba-a-as! Tabac!" he murmured.

The guard threw him a piece of tobacco, which the Kaffir cleverly caught and slapped into his mouth. At once the four or five other Kaffirs of the gang turned, and, reading good nature in their sentry's face, held out their hands mutely.

"Like babies for sweets," mused the Englishman, as he distributed the small luxuries. "They're a rum lot. Not one of them in for less than three years, and that fellow Sixpence a lifer, and by Jove, to see them laughing now, without a handcuff in the crowd of 'em, you'd think them schoolboys going in swimming."

They reached the little lake, shallow at the banks, deep in the centre, where a rushy, marshy island lay, more water than mud. The other working parties had foregathered, and Sixpence and his comrades, each armed

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with a piece of soap, soon joined the crowd in the water, swimming, spluttering, playing in the cool pond like boys.

The white guards, leaning on their rifles, stood at intervals round the bank. In the shallows a group of blacks danced a mock war dance, naked as monkeys, advancing and retiring with fantastic arms, crooning the hum of the impis.

Then it was difficult, almost impossible, for the guards to distinguish each his own men. In their convict clothes, each prisoner had some distinguishing mark; stripped, bobbing their black and woolly heads in the water, there was a tantalizing likeness among all the swimmers.

After a time they began to come out, one by one, and dress. Then a guard made his gang fall in and marched them up the kopje to the prison gates. Another followed, and another, until the village guard was left last to bring in his men. He was young and recently employed by the town; he could not talk the native dialects, and now he was much perturbed, for he could give to himself no explanation of the evident fact that there was none left in the water, and yet he was one man short.

The Kaffirs only chattered and laughed at him, enjoying the excellent joke. His eye anxiously searched the surface of the lake: there was nothing there. The rushes on the mud bank could barely have concealed a rabbit. Hoping that Sixpence, the missing man, had, in mischief—for the Kaffirs abounded in malicious tricks—slipped away with another gang, the guard hurried the others to the gaol, where he reported what had happened.

The warder of the gaol received the report without comment or rebuke, but promptly seized a rifle from the rack, left the other prisoners to be shut up in the cells by a few guards and took the rest at a run to the lake.

Meanwhile the gang had hardly left the band of the pond before, in the gathering dusk, there was a rustle among the scant rushes of the mud-bank. The mud stirred, and from the soft bed where it had been entirely immersed, leaving only the face to the air, arose the black form of Sixpence.

Silently he slipped into the water and swam ashore, as silently, his broad face stretched in a joyous grin.

He stayed for no covering, but crawled up the steep banks, stooped down as low as he could and ran away across the stony bluffs which surrounded the prison. He had not gone a hundred yards before the guards came running down to the lake and saw him.

The warder shouted to him to halt, but Sixpence ran more swiftly, yet not in a direct line. In a lightning-like zigzag course he darted from right to left obliquely, always onward, but in such short, swift tacks that he was an almost impossible target.

Five guns were aimed at him; five guns swerved momentarily right and left to find a mark before they were fired.

Sixpence waved his hand merrily over his head and disappeared beyond the bluffs, unhurt.

A Zulu servant led down two saddled horses, but the warder looked at the setting sun and shrugged his shoulders.

"No use," he said. "It'll be dark in ten minutes, and the black fellow will be hidden somewhere. I suppose you know he was in for manslaughter?"

The village guard hung his head.

"Oh, I don't blame you," said the warder. "Older hands than you can be taken in. I suppose he buried himself in the mud. Of course there will be an inquiry!"

There was, but a very short one, held in the gaol. In the middle of it a thundering demand for admittance was made with a knobkerry on the outer gate. The guard who opened the wicket led Sixpence before the court of inquiry, as cheerful and fat and with as broad a smile as ever.

He explained to the court that he had been home, had suffered from home-sickness, had enjoyed himself and was glad to be back again.

"Very little food over there," he said pointing to the north, "but plenty 'scoff' here."

So the bewildered officials took him in, to his great content, and, after giving him twelve lashes for the trouble he had caused, allowed the man who preferred prison to freedom to resume his former life. He never, after that, behaved

Swimming, spluttering, and playing in the cool pond like boys.

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otherwise than as a model prisoner, save once again, two years later, when he escaped and returned as before, taking his lashes with perfect good humour, and eating a big supper immediately after them.

He became a privileged character, an uncommissioned assistant about the office, until, in ten years, with African self-complacence, he looked upon himself as far above all other prisoners, and rather as a permanent, semi-official, permitted even on occasion to hold the keys.

Indeed, he had committed murder under the greatest provocation, and his good humour, his strength, and his faithfulness to the only home he had ever known, where meals were certain all the year round, made of him a favourite with the warder, to whom he attached himself as a kind of body servant.

Now, in those days, when the land was very young, and white men were few and white women were unknown, the methods of disciplining the unruly Kaffirs were primitive. Yet there was a greater intimacy and a closer intercourse between the whites and the blacks than there ever will be again. They fought frequently and were guilty alike of savagery, the one to the other. The white man, of course, was the victor always in the end, but the Kaffir, on the surface at least, bore little malice, and, having been knocked down, rose with some admiration in his heart for the man who thrashed him.

Sixpence had fought with his tribe and been conquered; had committed a crime and had been promptly punished for it. Far from sulking over his misfortunes, he was possessed with a spirit of respect for the invaders of his country.

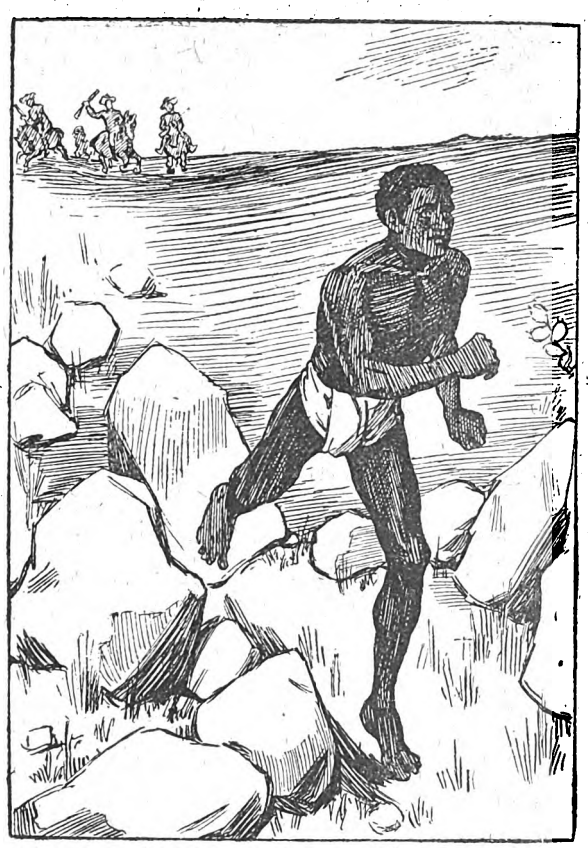
The only time the negro ever sighs is when he wishes he was white. Sixpence wished so hard and so often, and imitated the white people so earnestly, that, save when he thrust his broadly laughing face at a mirror, he was convinced that he was pretty nearly white. One man, however, was his ideal, his master, his demigod—the warder.

His attractions were such as to draw to him perhaps a dog, and he fed and thrashed Sixpence like a dog.

His accomplishments appealed to the convict. He was a crack shot with a revolver or rifle; he rode daringly; he could throw an assegai as well as Sixpence himself, and he had mysterious powers over pen and ink which awed Sixpence, crouching in a corner of the office. De Jough was an Afrikander; his father had been a discharged English soldier—his mother no one knew. He had won his wardership by ferocious fighting in the territory and by the respect his prowess gained for him among the natives. His sullen reticence and sudden furies had won him enemies; never had he called any man a friend. Therefore the life prisoner's doglike affection for him, after amusing him at first, in the slow movement of the months dragged from him a feeling as near akin to regard as is that of a school bully for the small boy whom he daily thrashes, but whom he will allow no other to threaten.

It was his privilege to select from the convicts a personal servant, and he chose Sixpence, even taking him away on a lonely hunt, even trusting to him to safely guide him home after a debauch.

Periodically he drank, and in excess, not in gaol, nor in the village, but in a lonely roadside tavern some miles away. Then for months he was sullenly abstemious, cruelly strict and unapproachable. Sixpence welcomed these intermittent frenzies of the warder with glee, for in them the man's nature swung about, and he was boisterously jovial.



But Sixpence ran more swiftly.

Then the Kaffir held high his head, and was filled with pride, because of the great cordiality and friendship the drunken white man evinced for the utterly unsophisticated and faithful black.

These outbreaks lasted about two days; then the Kaffir would lead his master's horse home, the warder slouching heavily in the saddle. Reverence, affection for something, however poor the idol, is good for man, savage or civilised. The raw Kaffir in his kraal reveres nothing, loves nothing. Therefore, though such a prison life would have degraded a white man beyond hope, it was good for Sixpence; he learned to love. He became human.

After such a debauch, one night when the sun had gone down, the two went homeward. The warder was singing, and abusing Sixpence, who tried to sing also, for not keeping the tune. They made a horrid noise, a hoarse and hideous bellow that spread far from them over the veld, until it seemed to disturb the solemn echoes of the distant grimly darkening hills, and silence, above the plains, the gentler voices of the southern stars.

Sixpence had his share of drink, and it took but little to turn his foolish brain. The moon, also, was not yet risen, and, for these reasons, as they passed along the trek and were unaware of all but their own discordant music, a man stood in front of them and blocked their path before his approach was noticed. It was the resident magistrate, an English civil servant, just out, and a patron of the warder.

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The latter, when he saw who stopped him, strove to sit erect and proffer a salutation, but the effort only unsettled his balance, and let him tumble sprawlingly in the roadway. He looked up in an almost sober spasm of shame, and by the starlight saw duskily the gentlemanly face of the magistrate looking down upon him with the deepest disgust.

"Again, Mr. De Jough?" the high official said, coldly, "in spite of warnings! This is too bad. It is impossible that this can go on."

De Jough staggered to his feet sullenly.

"Do as you like!" he cried, sulkily. "I can't stop it. I've been warder of the gaol for years, and no man can say I have not done my duty."

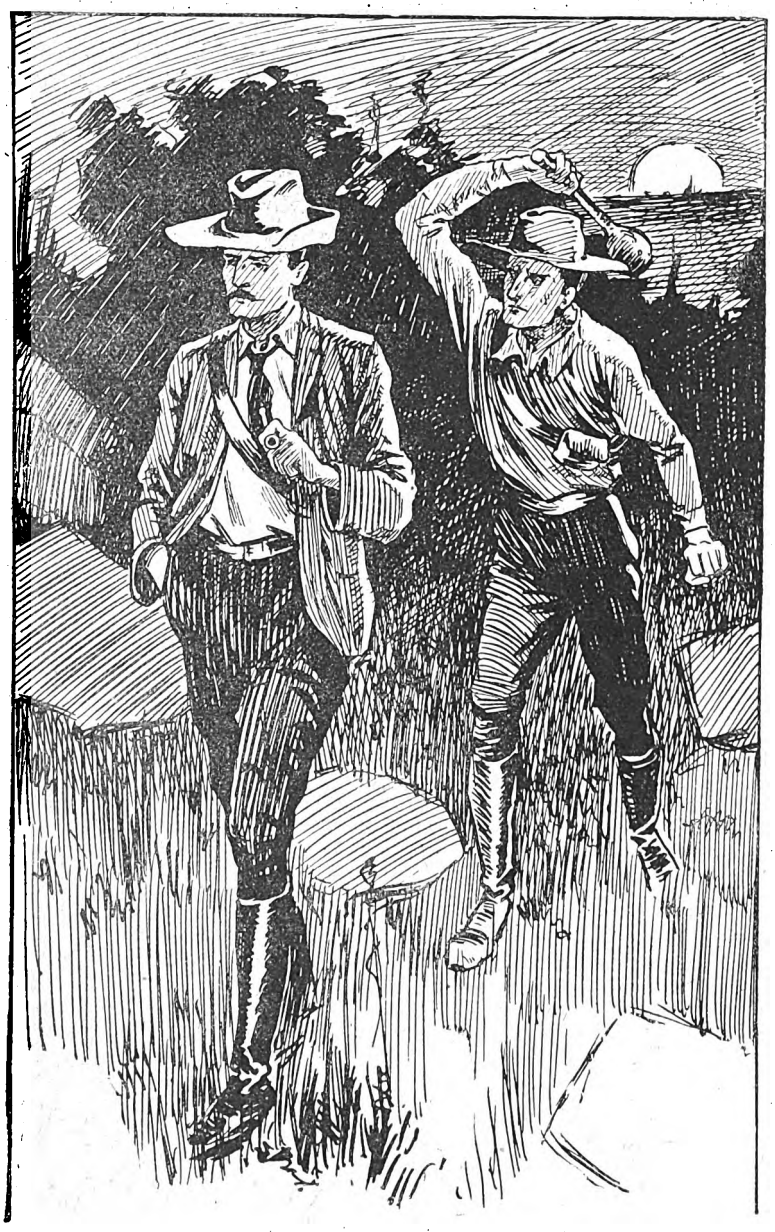
"I grant it," the magistrate answered, almost gently. "I grant it—but this cannot go on, you know."

"It's got to go on. It can't be stopped. Do you think I haven't tried to stop myself?"

The poor wretch thrust his face fiercely in front of the other's.

The magistrate drew back with a shudder from that horrid breath.

"I am sorry for you, but it can't go on. You are under arrest," he said firmly.



De Jough took a step after him.

De Jough gasped, in sudden sobriety.

Arrest? Inquiry? Dismissal meant ruin. The official stepped forward in the night.

Sixpence was standing vacantly grinning at the horse's head, understanding nothing of what was said. In his hand he carried a knobkerry, which the warder, as a defence, always allowed him on their night expeditions.

De Jough snatched it, a heavy-headed club, studded with nails.

The magistrate slowly walked away.

De Jough took a quick step after him, and the club crashed into the official's skull. De Jough dropped the stick as the man fell and stood still shaking with passion, staring at the body. Then the frenzy passed, but the trembling continued, the chill of awful dismay. He lurched to the roadside and sat down on a dead ant-hill. The night was quite still. The late, round, big African moon was slowly rising above the gaol walls on the kopje, more than a mile away.

The lonely trek was soundless of the feet of passengers, the low of waggon oxen, the lash-snap of the driver. In that lonely wilderness there was no traffic.

The Kaffir still held the horse, still stared vacantly, his drunken grin not yet dead on his lips. De Jough looked up and met his servant's eyes. He motioned to him, and called faintly for a drink. Sixpence went to the saddlebags and brought a bottle, and his master drank greedily. Then his gaze was diverted to the body in the path, and he was conscious of thankfulness that it had fallen face downwards, so that the eyes were hidden. He spoke in "taal" to Sixpence.

"Is—is he dead?"

The Kaffir slipped the horse's rein into his master's hand, went to the body and felt it, and stirred it with his foot as he might have done that of a horse—not from contempt, not from hate, but because a dead thing is a dead thing to a Kaffir, and little more.

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"Ba-as," he said, in broken English. "Him very dead."

De Jough gulped another drink, and soon the trembling ceased. He was far from being a stranger to death by violence, and soon he was able to collect his wits and think, his face buried in his hands. But the face of Sixpence underwent a change as he resumed charge of the horse and looked down upon the warder. The black man's slowly acquired ideas of right and wrong, of the superiority of all white people to all black, were suddenly upset. This thing which the warder had done was what he himself had done, what many Kaffirs had done, but a white man—to another white man!

It was a surprise. Slowly Sixpence's brain awoke to the horrible fact that De Jough—his master, his model whom he had so desired to imitate, was no better than himself.

The warder looked up at last and saw the Kaffir's bewildered, saddened face, saddened as a dog's eyes are saddened when it misses something that is gone and cannot understand. Sixpence's ideal was dead; dimly and with dull pain he felt that there was little to choose between being white or being black.

"What are we to do?" the warder asked. "We cannot go back to the gaol."

Sixpence had not thought of that, but he at once understood. He had escaped hanging for manslaughter by a narrow edge, because the Kaffir he had slain had been in the wrong, but—how could the warden escape hanging?

"To the kraals," he said, his mind reverting, childlike, to its affection for and obedience to his master. He suddenly grovelled at the warder's feet, and began to howl softly, speaking in his native dialect, "They shall not hang the master; rather me, Sixpence the Bechuana. Am I not black and of no use? But the baas, how shall his children in the gaol live without him? But they shall not catch us! Know the way through the big desert, Kahlihari: I will show the baas the path to the kraals, and my people will hide us and protect us."

With a sudden prolonged wail he recollected the delights, the plenty, the comforts of his prison home.

"In the kraals," he moaned, "we starve; in the gaol there is plenty 'scoff.'"

For a moment the warder's face brightened. He knew as well as Sixpence that he would be hanged if caught, and he knew that he could trust himself implicitly to the Bechuana's guidance, but his eyes gloomed again. Would not hanging be better than that? To live among savages, to starve and be cold of nights and suffer from fever? Surely—some other way.

Something in the moonlight by the dead man had drawn the Kaffir's notice. The magistrate's left hand lay spread on the road, the fingers pointing reproachfully at his murderer. On one finger gleamed a diamond ring. A Kaffir, dying, would have strength to steal a diamond.

Forgetting everything else, Sixpence passed the reins again to his master, sitting on the antheap, thinking, thinking in a panic of fear and doubt.

Then the white man leapt upon his startled horse and galloped away.

Sixpence dropped by the body and seized the dead man's hand. The warder watched him, and as a lightning flash reveals the hidden things so a sudden, lurid thought banished the mist from his brain and showed him what to do. He considered rapidly. The convict had brought his horse to him and met him on the road. No one had seen them together that night, save the magistrate, and he could not tell. It could all be explained, easily explained, to the authorities. In his coat pocket he felt his revolver, a little bulldog thing, but quite, quite big enough. Sixpence knelt by the body. The warder sprang upon him and grasped him by the shoulders, so that the black man looked round at him in dumb amazement.

"Baas angry?" he asked like a child.

Then the look in the warder's eyes terrified him.

"Baas! The Baas!" he wailed, but before the wail died on his tongue the pistol had cracked close to the nipple on his black breast, and he fell back beside the magistrate. In his hand he grasped the ring; De Jough seized the blood-stained knobkerry and put it beside him. Then the white man leapt upon his startled horse and galloped away.

"A simple ending," he thought, with a horrid chuckle. "Of course he murdered the chief for the diamond; of course, coming home I found him rifling the body; he resisted, and I shot him. The poor beast—well, it's only a Kaffir."

In the moonlight, face up, they found Sixpence, when the guards from the gaol came down the kopje. His face was not distorted at all, but rather the reflection of a pained surprise, as he thought, in the moment of dying, that he had been deceived.

P. Y. Black.

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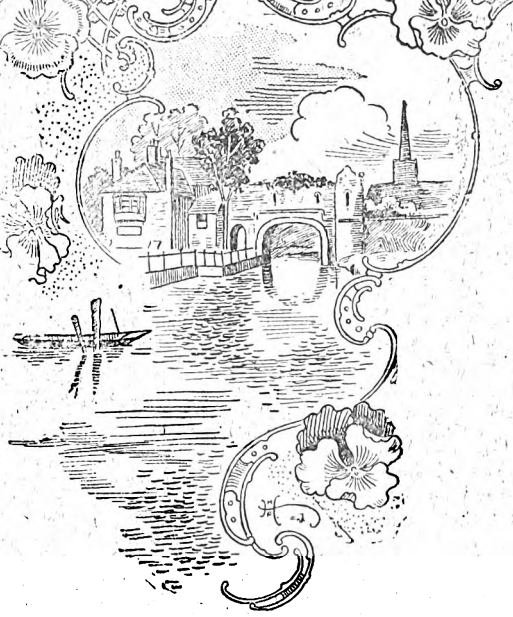
CARMEN'S FORTUNE.



CARMEN was the daughter of a Madrid clerk, whose earnings amounted to not more than two thousand pesetas (equal to about £80 a year). On this slender income her parents, who idolized her, brought her up like a princess. She was very pretty, and her mother was wont to look at her and exclaim:

"My daughter was born to marry a prince."

But this tender mother died long before the time for any possible realisation of her hopes, and soon after the father died also. Carmen was thus left an orphan at the age of twelve. The pastor of Santa Cruz was her uncle. He took her into his home and treated her affectionately, being seconded in this generous course by his housekeeper, a good woman by the name of Ciriaca.

Up to the age of sixteen years Carmen appeared like a little girl, and a very pretty little girl, too. But after that she developed very rapidly, so that she was reckoned among the most beautiful women of Madrid.

A young man of humble station, but of resolute character, began to frequent the street in which she lived, his eyes constantly directed toward her balcony. Carmen on her part would come out on the balcony, coquettishly attired, and return the glances of the enamoured youth, and smile. The pastor, having observed these movements, questioned his niece one evening.

"[illegible] like a father," he [illegible]

"and that I wish to see you happy. Who is this young man who passes so often and smiles when he sees you?"

At this question Carmen turned as red as a pink and stammered an evasive answer.

"Come, come," remonstrated her good uncle, "tell me the truth. There is nothing to be ashamed of in inspiring an honest and pure affection. Does the young man please you?"

"Yes," murmured Carmen.

"And do you know his position in life?"

"No."

"Or what his name is?"

"No."

"Very well. Don't puzzle your little head. I will find out who he is, and if he is worthy of you, you shall marry him. We must not forget that you are poor, and the day I die you will be left destitute."

On the next day the pastor informed his niece that the young man was a journeyman tailor of irreproachable character. Carmen made no response, but her face became clouded.

"Why so serious?" asked her uncle. "You told me the young man pleased you."

"Yes, but a tailor!"

"My child," rejoined the pastor, "you are not a duchess. What you need is a good man who will love you and support you in a suitable manner. Now this young man seems to possess the requisite qualities, and you would do wrong if you reject him because he is only a working man."

"You are right, uncle," assented the girl.

"Well, then, he will come to-morrow to ask your hand in marriage. I hope you will not give him a refusal."

On the next day Carmen and the housekeeper went out to see if they could not find in some lottery office the number corresponding to the number of pitchers of water which the inn-keepers of Madrid poured every day into their wine. A statistician had ascertained this number by most laborious calculation, and he had demonstrated that the scarcity of water in Madrid was to be ascribed solely to this daily practice of the inn-keepers. Senora Ciriaca, it may be mentioned, had a firm belief that she would one day gain the first prize in a state lottery.

In the street an old gipsy woman came up to Carmen, crying out:

"Oh, my pretty little rose, brighter than the sun and fresher than the morning dew, you ought to have your fortune told. Will you let me tell it? I can divine the heart's secrets and penetrate into the future."

Carmen turned away disdainfully, and the old woman [illegible] perceived

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Immediately she approached the latter, exclaiming in accents of joy:

"Ah, noble lady, patroness of the poor fortune-teller, Heaven must have sent you hither for me to tell your fortune and that of this young rose here."

"Thank you," returned Ciriaca, dryly. "You are going to serve me the same way you did when you told me I should win in the lottery with a number corresponding to the number of steps in the tower of Santa Cruz."

"How! noble lady," exclaimed the gipsy, "you used the number and did not win?"

"Not a penny."

"Then I swear to you that if that is the case, you must have made a mistake in your counting."

"But I counted the steps, one by one, from the bottom to the top," protested the old housekeeper.

"But you ought to have counted them from the top to the bottom," returned the fortune-teller. "That is what I told you, and I have never deceived any one."

Ciriaca, whose intelligence was not of the highest, began to ponder what difference it could make whether the steps of Santa Cruz were reckoned from the top downward or from the bottom upward, and she ended by believing that she had been wrong in doubting the infallibility of the prophetess.

"Now then," resumed the shrewd old gipsy, "shall we tell the fortune of this blushing rose of spring?"

"None use," interposed Carmen, drawing back her little white hand from the old woman's brown ones.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the gipsy. "My dear young lady, for fifty years I have been telling people's fortunes good and bad, and I have never told an untrue one."

Carmen turned to Ciriaca for advice, and the credulous old housekeeper persuaded her to place confidence in a science which she herself believed to be really infallible.

The fortune-teller examined the young girl's palm attentively.

"Here are some lines," she began, "which unite and form an O, which stands for office. These here form an A, which stands for alto (high). Oh, beautiful hands with veins of gold! You are going to marry a man who will hold a very exalted station in life."

At these words Carmen's eyes shone, while those of her companion filled with tears of joy.

"Ah, my dear child," cried Ciriaca, clasping the girl in her arms; "your mother was indeed right in saying that you would marry a prince. Your husband will be at least a Prime Minister."

The housekeeper and her young charge returned home in the highest of spirits, and immediately the girl declared to her uncle that she positively could not marry a tailor.

Then she betook herself to her balcony, musing on her future glory, and the poor young man was across the way looking at her and smiling. But she, instead of smiling in return, as on the previous evening, put on a solemn countenance and turned away from the window with a contemptuous movement.

Months and years passed and Carmen grew more and more beautiful. In her walks, at the theatres, at balls, and, in short, wherever she went she was followed by those young gallants who constantly hover round a beautiful woman. Often she heard declarations of love which she could not entertain seriously, because they were not made in a seemly and worthy manner, and

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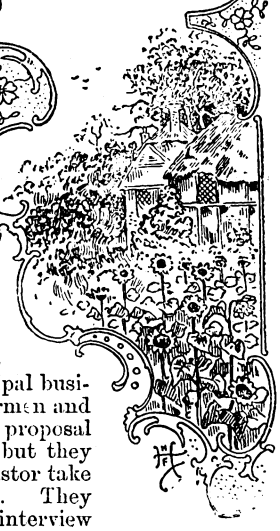

because her mind was constantly occupied with the high destiny promised her by the fortune-teller.

One evening at a concert an elegant young man paid her some compliments, and on the following day made formal avowal of love to her by letter of his desire to marry her. He held a very good position, being at the head of one of the principal business houses in Madrid. Carmen and Ciriaca resolved to give this proposal their serious consideration, but they were careful not to let the pastor take part in their deliberations. They had not told him of their interview with the gipsy fortune-teller, knowing that he had no patience with things of that sort, and they felt only too sure that he would joyfully accept the merchant's proposal without any discussion.

In the end, both resolved that Carmen would not be fulfilling her destiny by accepting the proposal.

Accordingly Carmen refused the merchant's offer, and some time after treated in like manner two other letters which came from young men of the middle class.

One morning, however, her uncle came to her with a radiant countenance, proclaiming that he had a great piece of news to announce.

"What is it, pray?" she cried.

"Well, then, my ambitious young lady," he replied, "your dreams are at length going to be realised. You can now marry a man who is a hundred times higher than a tailor."

"What do you mean?" asked the girl.

"I mean," he answered, "that the Count of Altos Humos, whom you know by sight, has asked me for your hand in marriage."

"Really!" exclaimed Carmen and Ciriaca together, carried away by a common emotion.

Now at last it seemed certain that the old gypsy's prediction was about to be fulfilled to the letter.

"And what answer did you give the count, uncle?" asked the young girl.

"I replied that I must consult you, but that if you accepted his offer I should be delighted."

"You did well not to pledge yourself," said Carmen.

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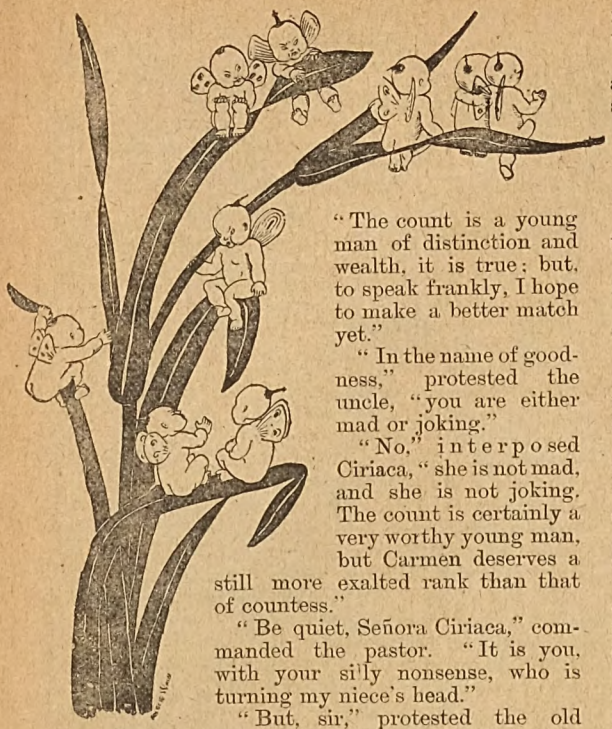

"The count is a young man of distinction and wealth, it is true; but, to speak frankly, I hope to make a better match yet."

"In the name of goodness," protested the uncle, "you are either mad or joking."

"No," interposed Ciriaca, "she is not mad, and she is not joking. The count is certainly a very worthy young man, but Carmen deserves a still more exalted rank than that of countess."

"Be quiet, Señora Ciriaca," commanded the pastor. "It is you, with your silly nonsense, who is turning my niece's head."

"But, sir," protested the old woman. "I am only repeating what your sister often used to say herself, that her daughter was born to marry a prince."

"Enough," interposed the pastor. "Carmen, answer me. I hope you are more reasonable and that you cannot seriously think of rejecting the incredible good fortune which heaven sends you."

"Uncle, let me consider the matter," replied the girl.

"Very well," replied her uncle, "I give you all day to decide. But to-morrow morning I must give the count an answer."

In the evening Carmen and Ciriaca held another consultation and decided that the count, distinguished though he was, was not the high dignitary promised by the fortune-teller; for after all he had no other employment than that of collecting his rents.

On the following morning the pastor filled with shame and indignation, went off to announce to the noble lover the rejection of his suit.

After this occurrence Carmen and the housekeeper expected every day to witness the arrival of an embassy empowered to ask the hand of the young lady in marriage. But days and months passed, and Carmen arrived at her twenty-fifth birthday without hearing of any Minister sighing for her affection.

Gradually she saw the number of her admirers diminish. She even reached the point when she could be present at a bull-fight without arousing the enthusiasm or even attracting the attention of a single torero. She began to lose confidence in the gipsy's splendid prediction, and Ciriaca had to use all her eloquence to reassure her.

"Do not be disturbed," she would say, "it is true that at twenty-five the freshness of a woman's beauty begins to decline, but what one does not obtain in early youth may yet be secured later. The one thing necessary is for you to show yourself as gracious and winning as you have been hitherto."

One day Carmen, after making herself specially agreeable to her uncle, asked him whether he had lately seen the count of Athol Humos.

"I saw him a few days ago," was the reply.

"He is not married yet?"

"No."

"Oh, what a silly girl I was not to marry him."

"Let us not think of that unfortunate affair," urged the pastor. "I cannot think of it without regret."

"And did not the count make any enquiry about me?" asked Carmen.

"None at all. You could not expect him to forget the injustice of your disdainful refusal of his suit."

"Yes, it was very unjust," she admitted.

"You acknowledge it, then," he asked, "and you would not refuse the hand of this noble Spaniard if he should offer it again, now?"

"No, certainly not," she replied, "and since you care for me so much, and are so concerned in my welfare, I wish you would have the kindness to speak to the count on my behalf, with all your tact and skill."

"What! Do you wish to ask him in marriage yourself?" demanded the pastor, in surprise.

"No," answered Carmen, "but you could, with all delicacy and tact, try to bring the count to the point of renewing his proposal. Come, uncle, I am sure you could do that admirably."

"Oh, these women!" groaned the good man in despair. "Well, niece, I will go and see the count, and invent some pretext for speaking to him adroitly about you; then we will see what will become of it."

On the following morning he betook himself to the house of the Count of Altos Humos.

"Ah!" cried the latter in greeting, "I am glad to see you! I have just bought a statuette for the church, and I should like to have your opinion of it."

"I am delighted at the opportunity of examining it," returned the other. "You know that I am a connoisseur in such matters."

The good man hereupon delivered a formal eulogy on the excellence of the piece of sculpture, which really was a work of merit, and at the same time sought an opportunity to speak about Carmen—which, however, did not seem to be a very easy thing to accomplish.

"Now that you are here," urged the host at length, "you must stay to lunch."

"That would give me great pleasure," replied his guest, "but my niece has very regular habits and is especially particular about my being in time for meals; while I on my part submit to this petty tyranny, knowing that women, who, like Carmen, rule their households wisely and graciously, are becoming rare."

The count listened gravely to this unexpected encomium of Carmen; then, resuming his customary ease of manner, he said, with a smile:

"Yes, certainly, Carmen is an admirable young lady."

"Thank you," cried the pastor, enchanted with the success of his little manœuvre. "I can assure you that my niece only asks an opportunity to show you her gratitude for the good opinion you have of her."

"Very well, then," rejoined the Count, "I am going to abuse her kindness."

"Abuse, Count. Can you even think it will be an abuse?"

"I should like to have your dear Carmen, who has such skill and taste, kindly make me a robe for my statuette."

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"With the greatest pleasure," exclaimed the pastor. "My niece is really very skilful, above all in things of that sort, and she will be most happy to perform the task which you intrust to her."

The good man returned home, well-pleased with the success of his diplomacy, and very happy at being able to report to his niece that the Count did not harbour any ill-will against her, since he asked a favour at her hands.

The years passed on and still Carmen remained unmarried; both she and the housekeeper had begun to lose faith in the predictions of the old fortune-teller, and Carmen would not have been averse to an offer of marriage from any of the suitors of the middle class who had at one time or other in the past proposed to her. She was even inclined to listen to the advances of shopkeepers and assistants, but none seemed to think of making a proposal.

She reached the age of thirty without any change of condition, and by this time her fear of becoming an old maid had acquired such a hold on her that she was tempted to use all her art to win the proposal which seemed never likely to be made.

One day Carmen went out, and by chance entered a little hardware shop kept by a young man who had been a choir boy in the church of St. Sebastian, but, by reason of his increasing years and size, had been obliged to give up the position. For want of a better occupation he had taken this little hardware business, and, as he heartily disliked it, he sought distractions in paying compliments to all the women, young or old, handsome or ugly, who chanced to enter his shop.

"May heaven bless the beautiful rose!" he exclaimed on seeing Carmen. "For a rose like you I would willingly go to prison."

"A truce to your nonsense!" returned Carmen. "Give me a box of sulphur matches—those that have the strongest odour."

"Do you want to poison yourself with them?" asked the young man.

"I don't know," she replied.

"If you are unhappy," he continued, "I will console you."

"How?"

"By marrying you."

Carmen began to talk with the young man, and became so engrossed that she forgot all about he sulphur matches.

On the next day Rufo—for that was the name of the ex-choir boy—closed his shop, and Carmen announced to her uncle that she had a lover, a fine young man, well known in the parish of St. Sebastian.

The pastor made inquiries about Rufo, and as he heard nothing but good concerning him he readily acquiesced in his niece's matrimonial plans.

"The young man," he said, "has no occupation, but we shall succeed in finding him one, I hope."

Soon after this the wedding took place, and Carmen had the satisfaction of walking along the streets of Madrid on the arm of her husband.

On the following day the pastor returned from the church radiant.

"I bring you good news," he called to Rufo. "The bell-ringer of Santa Cruz has resigned his place and you shall be his successor."

"Bless me!" cried Ciriaca, "a very exalted position; the prediction is fulfilled."

The next instant she went out to find the old gipsy fortune-teller, in order to ask her pardon for having mistrusted her science, and to get a lucky number for the lottery at the same time.

S. F. Amine.

Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

I.—HE MAKES SOME INTERESTING EXPERIMENTS IN MENTAL TELEGRAPHY.

MR. BOWSER was apparently reading his newspaper, and Mrs. Bowser was sewing, when all of a sudden he burst out laughing and slapped his leg. She looked up in an enquiring way, and he explained:

"It's a wonderful thing—positively wonderful, and I'm firmly convinced at last."

"What is it you find so wonderful?" she asked doubtfully.

"I'll tell you, and I hope you won't jump on me about fads. You've read and heard of what they call mental telegraphy, I presume? Well, I've been experimenting on you for the last half hour, and the results are really wonderful. When you first sat down I mentally telegraphed you to cross your feet. You did so. Then I telegraphed you to look up at the clock. You did so. Then I ordered you to scratch your nose, yawn and rock backwards and forwards, and you obeyed."

"What nonsense!" replied Mrs. Bowser.

"There's no nonsense about it. It is an idea as old as time. Why shouldn't one person's thoughts fly through space and be communicated to another? What did you do at exactly three o'clock this afternoon?"

"I went out to order meat for dinner," she answered, after a moment's thought.

"Exactly—ha! ha! ha! At three o'clock I telegraphed you to go out after meat and you went. Don't talk about fads. It is positively wonderful, and if you

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would only go in with me we would develop it to an astonishing degree. There you go; I just telegraphed you to raise your left hand and you lifted it to scratch your ear!"

"Is it possible that you really believe in such ridiculous twaddle?" asked Mrs. Bowser.

"Twaddle! That's it, of course! Anything you can't make out is twaddle. Of course I believe in it, as do millions of others, and it won't take me half an hour to convince you. I don't know how it will work on animals, but I'm going to experiment. There's the cat under the piano. I will telegraph her to come here. Just watch me. I lean forward and fix my eyes upon hers. I say to her: 'Come here—come here.' She gets nervous. She moves. She comes. She——"

The cat yeowled and spat and made a sudden rush over Mr. Bowser's feet, and disappeared through the open door and up the stairs.

"It—it wasn't exactly a success," he admitted after the flurry was over, "but that's easily explained. A cat hasn't a soul. She felt my mental influence to an extent, but couldn't make out what I wanted."

"Didn't you say you hadn't time to shave this morning," queried Mrs. Bowser as she took up her needle again.

"What if I did?" he asked.

"You'd better get down your razor and shave now instead of wasting your evening."

"I'll do nothing of the kind. I've set out to make some experiments in mental telegraphy, and I'm going to do it if I had twenty beards waiting to be shaved. I needn't expect any help from you, of course, but I don't want it. I will now telegraph to Jones to run in here. At the office to-day we understood each other perfectly."

Mr. Bowser closed his eyes, contracted his thoughts, and a mental dispatch was sent to Jones next door. There was silence for three minutes, and then came a knock at the door.

"Ah! you don't believe, eh?" he exclaimed as he got up to answer it. "I think you'll call this something besides 'twaddle' before the evening is over."

The door was opened, but it didn't happen to be Jones who stood there. It was a man who explained that he had walked all the way from Portsmouth, and if Mr. Bowser could spare him a sixpence for a night's lodging——"

The door closed, and the conversation was abruptly brought to an end.

"Why didn't Jones come in?" asked Mrs. Bowser, as Mr. Bowser returned to the dining room looking like a man who had made an unlucky deal on the Stock-Exchange.

"That's easily explained. That confounded old tramp interrupted the message. He was probably standing on Jones' doorstep at the moment, and the dispatch couldn't pass through him."

"You ought to have sent a corkscrew dispatch, so that it could have twisted round him."

As Mr. Bowser glared at her, he felt his heels lifting up and his ears working, but by a powerful effort he restrained himself, and after a minute or two he said:

"I will now experiment on the cook. I will telegraph her to come up to the head of the stairs and ask you whether you will have oatmeal or toast for breakfast."

He sat down with his head in his hands, and there was silence for thirty seconds. Then there came a crash and a yell from the basement. Both ran down to find that the cook had pushed her elbow through a pane of glass while pulling down the window.

"Were you about to come upstairs?" asked Mr. Bowser, as she made her explanation.

"I was, sir," she replied.

"To ask Mrs. Bowser about breakfast?"

"No, sir. I was going to hand you the gas bill, which was left here this afternoon!"

"You see what nonsense it all is," said Mrs. Bowser, as they went upstairs.

"I see nothing of the kind," he sharply replied. "The trouble is that you are antagonistic. I'll get along without you, however. I wonder where that silly cat is?"

"You'd better let the cat alone. If you sit and glare at her again she may go mad. Better try Jones again."

"That's sarcasm, of course," he said, as he gritted

"She gets nervous. She moves."

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his teeth and glared at her; "but I'll fetch Jones over here dead or alive. You sniff and scoff at this thing, but that only shows your ignorance. Go out among your neighbours and talk as you do to me, and they'll put you down for an idiot. Why, woman, the theory of mental telegraphy is older than the hills; it was known 3,000 years B.C."

"But there is nothing in it," she persisted.

"But there is, and I'll prove it. Now you sit down and be passive, and I'll try it on Jones again. Don't antagonise me in your mind, but give me a fair hearing. Now I have my thoughts on Jones. He is sitting on the sofa. He begins to feel the current. Now my message is becoming communicated. He says to his wife that he is going to drop in here for a game of whist. Now he is at his front door. Now he is out on the step. Now he is at our gate. Now he knocks at the door."

At that instant the knocker sounded, and it was such a curious coincidence that Mrs. Bowser sprang to her feet and turned pale.

"Didn't I tell you so?" grimly observed Mr. Bowser, as he again started for the door.

Two men and a cat went rolling down the steps.

He pulled it open in the firm belief that Jones was standing there, but it didn't turn out that way. It was the same man who had called before—the man who "walked from Portsmouth." He had returned to see if there hadn't been some misunderstanding. It was possible that Mr. Bowser had understood him to say that he had lost his all on a horse-race or in card playing, and for that reason had refused him financial assistance. He was making a voluble explanation when Mr. Bowser interrupted with:

"You old scoundrel; I'll have you arrested for begging! How dare you come to people's front doors! Why, I'll——"

He pushed out of the door and seized the mendicant by the collar, and at that instant the cat came flying downstairs. Mental telegraphy had notified her that the front door was open, and that the promenading felines of the neighbourhood awaited her arrival to lead the grand march. As she went out on the jump she struck Mr. Bowser's legs, and the next instant two men and a cat went rolling down the steps. It was three minutes later when Mr. Bowser limped into the hall. The "tourist" had fled with his coat ripped up the back, and the cat had dodged the issue and scaled three fences.

"Well, why didn't Jones come in?" asked Mrs. Bowser, who had not left her chair.

Mr. Bowser did not answer. Reaching out for the banister he pulled himself from step to step with a clump! clump! clump! and she heard him kick open a door as he reached the landing. Then she knew that Jones and the cat and the cook and the performance was over for the evening.

M. Quad.

[Next Week: A "PROFESSIONAL" GIVES HIM SOME ADVICE ABOUT MUSCULAR DEVELOPMENT.]

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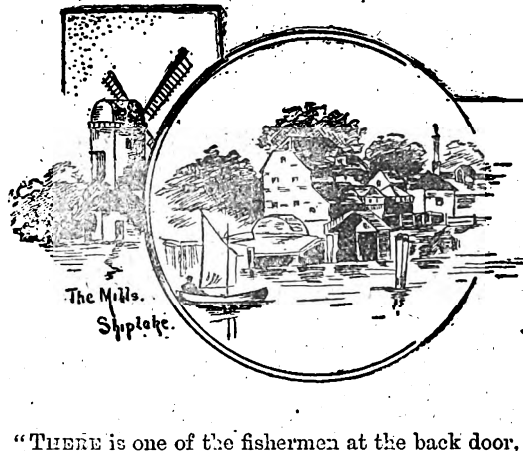

The Skipper's Ruse.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

"THERE is one of the fishermen at the back door, sir, who wants a word with you."

"Tell him to come in," was my reply.

"I did, sir, but he says he would rather not. I think something has happened, if I may make so bold as to say it," added my housekeeper.

"Very well," and I put my book aside to interview him.

Standing out in the darkness and rain was a figure in oilskins and sou'wester.

"Well? Who is it?" I inquired.

"It's me, sir."

"Who," I asked, peering out into the night. "Come nearer. Why do you stand out there in the wet?"

"Beg pardon, sir. It's only me—Bob Cooper."

The tone was somewhat thick and husky.

"Well, come inside. What is the use of standing there?" I said, somewhat impatiently, "when there is shelter as well as a warm fire here."

"I prefers to stand 'ere, if it's all the same to you, sir. The fact is I have a bad report to make—pore Jack Shipways is gone."

"Gone! Gone where?"

"Don't know northink, sir, except that 'e has gone, pore soul."

"Do you mean that he has been lost at sea?"

"Yes, sir. It's a bad job, but it's the way we all 'as to go."

There was the brittle swish of oilskins as Bob brushed his face with his sleeve, to wipe away the tears as I fondly imagined.

"Sorry to trouble you, but I thought perhaps you would come with me, sir, and help to break the noos to the wife. She don't know yet, an' I alwus thinks such noos sounds better somehow coming from the parson."

"Wait a moment."

I hurried off to put on my overcoat, and joined him in a few seconds. We walked down the street together. There was, I saw, a decided want of balance in the skipper's walk. At the same time there was a suspicious odour of rum in the night breeze. However, I thought the poor man was to be excused under the sad circumstances, and did not refer to it. Besides, it was Christmas time.

"When was Jack last seen?" I inquired as we walked along.

"Two nights ago. When I went below, he was at the tiller. Next mornin' he was missin'. It seems like a judgment on her," he added.

"Do you mean his wife?"

"Yes, sir. She's my own child, but she is a tartar—a fair tartar—a most unchristian girl when she gets into her tantrums, an' pore Jack's as decent a soul as anyone could meet. She has behaved bad, an' 'e was quite broken-'earted over the last row just afore we went away on this voyage. I said to 'er 'e may never come back no more. Now my words 'as come true; it seems jus' like a judgment. The whole voyage 'e 'as been down-like an' off his grub."

"You don't think he has committed suicide?" I asked quickly.

"Don't know northink, sir. It's a terrible calamity."

He did not seem very much overcome with grief himself I noticed.

"Well, skipper," I went on, "if Sally has a bad temper, you must admit she has a great deal to put up with at times, what with your drinking and his."

He winced at this home thrust, and for a time there was silence.

"Jack, I suppose, can speak for hisself," he resumed presently, "but it's all along o' this bad 'ealth that I enjoys which makes me take a drop at times—so 'elp me bob, sir. I ain't fond o' the drink—that's truth. Still, if she would behave 'erself, I would swear off the grog and chance my 'ealth on beer, an'. I know Jack would. Leastways if the poor chap was here to speak."

"Well, this is a bad business," I remarked gravely. "It will be a great blow to her, poor girl."

By this time we were near the little cottage. The skipper peeped past the blind.

"It's all right; she's inside, sir," he said, leading the way into the house.

I knew Mrs. Jack very well. Whatever her follies were, she was a good housewife. Anyone would have readily guessed that from the first glance at the neat little sitting-room. Everything spelt comfort. The cloth was laid for supper, a kettle sang merrily on the hob, Sally was standing by the fire attending to some red herring she was cooking, when her father opened the door and walked in.

"I heard you had got in three hours ago," she remarked casually.

The skipper prefaced his remarks by a series of short coughs to clear his thick voice.

"Here's the vicar, lass; cheer up. He's got some noos for yer—bad noos," was his salutation.

She had curtseyed to me, and now she turned with questioning glance to her father, who had flung himself

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down in a chair, and had begun vigorously to rock the cradle wherein lay his grandson.

"What is it, sir?" she asked, turning to me in alarm. "Nothink wrong with Jack, I hope?"

"I am sorry to say there is, Sally," I ventured. "Your father tells me he is missing! Pull yourself together, my good girl. We hope that he may have been picked up by some passing smack, but your father is afraid that your husband has been washed overboard."

"It's a judgment, Sally," grunted the skipper quite cheerfully. "I told yer it would 'appen. Now yer see my words has come true. Still, yer must cheer up as the vicar says."

It has often been my sad lot to break bad news to wives and children, whose husbands and fathers have been suddenly taken away, but never in all my experience have I seen anyone receive such tidings so calmly as Sally did. She sank down into a chair without a word.

There were no tears, no sign of any emotion whatever, save that her face became grey.

It is at such times that one feels at a loss for words, yet all the while I felt conscious of a sense of unreality about the whole affair.

"Father, are you tellin' me the truth?" she asked quietly, after a minute's silence.

Cooper seemed confused under her searching glance, and concentrated his attention upon a pipe he was charging.

"Do you hear what I say?" she demanded. "Are you speakin' the truth?"

"Arsk the vicar," he growled. "Didn't I come to you, sir, and say as 'ow pore Jack was gone?"

"You certainly gave me to understand that he was lost at sea," I said.

"Yes, an' I ain't tellin' no lies, an' I say it's a judgment for the way you have treated 'im, pore soul."

"I saw the smack come in, but the flag was not half mast," she proceeded.

"Have you reported the loss at the Custom House?" I interposed.

"Not yet," he replied uneasily. "Plenty o' time for that."

I did not like the way Cooper carefully avoided my eyes when they rested upon him.

"Of course, I 'opes the pore chap will turn up, so don't get too down-'earted, Sally," he said encouragingly, "but you're a widow sure enough."

"I am not going to be downhearted, for I don't believe you," was her frank response. "This is some trick—there is something behind it, I'm sure," she cried and her lips quivered.

"Where have you been since the vessel came in?" I asked, knowing that many a mischievous plot is concocted in the beer-house.

"Oh, I looked in at the Ferry Boat. There was a few friends in the snug, so I thought I would tell them the noos. They was awfully cut up, for they all liked him. It's only 'is own wife as hates 'im."

Again he carefully avoided my gaze.

"Cooper," I said severely, "it is my opinion you are not acting straight. Put on your sou'wester and come with me to the Collector of Customs. If what you say is true, you are liable to a penalty for not reporting it. On the other hand, if you are telling an untruth, all I can say is you are guilty of a shameful trick, and I will see if there is not some law by which you can be punished. Now, what have you got to say? If it is one of your jokes, you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

Though she appeared to be quite calm, I could distinctly hear the poor woman's heart beating as she awaited his reply.

For a few seconds, Cooper gazed into the fire with a dogged expression on his face, then with a sudden jerk he threw off his oilskin.

"It's all right, Sally. Jack is no more drowned than I am. It was just a trick to frighten you into lovin' 'im——"

But the remainder of his sentence was cut short, for poor Sally had fainted, and we had jumped to our feet. There was no want of feeling now on his part, and his contrition was beyond measure. He threw up the window and shouted. Before the echo had died away, Jack, the missing man, sprang in like a big mastiff, and rushed to the side of his wife, whose hands he began to chafe.

"You've made a bloomin' nice mess o' things with your fatherly advice. I believe you've killed 'er," shouted Jack excitedly.

I found afterwards that he was waiting outside for the result of the interview, and had even followed the skipper and myself down the street—by arrangement, of course.

The father rushed out and returned with some brandy, which I administered to the girl. Presently the colour came back to her pale face.

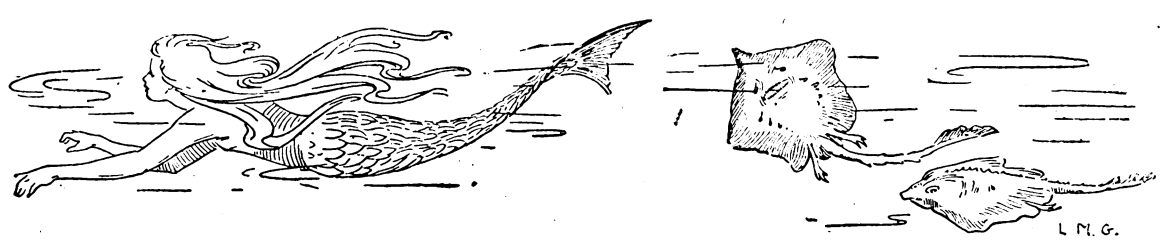
Both men assailed her in terms of endearment with keen anxiety depicted on their weatherbeaten faces, now all aglow with kindliness for the victim of their plot.

Their distress was piteous to behold, so I withheld my reproaches. No words of mine could have been stronger than their own expressed condemnation of their trick.

But it was some considerable time before Sally recovered consciousness. When she did, her first act was to put her arms round her husband's neck.

The reconciliation was complete, and I quietly withdrew.

Athol Forbes.



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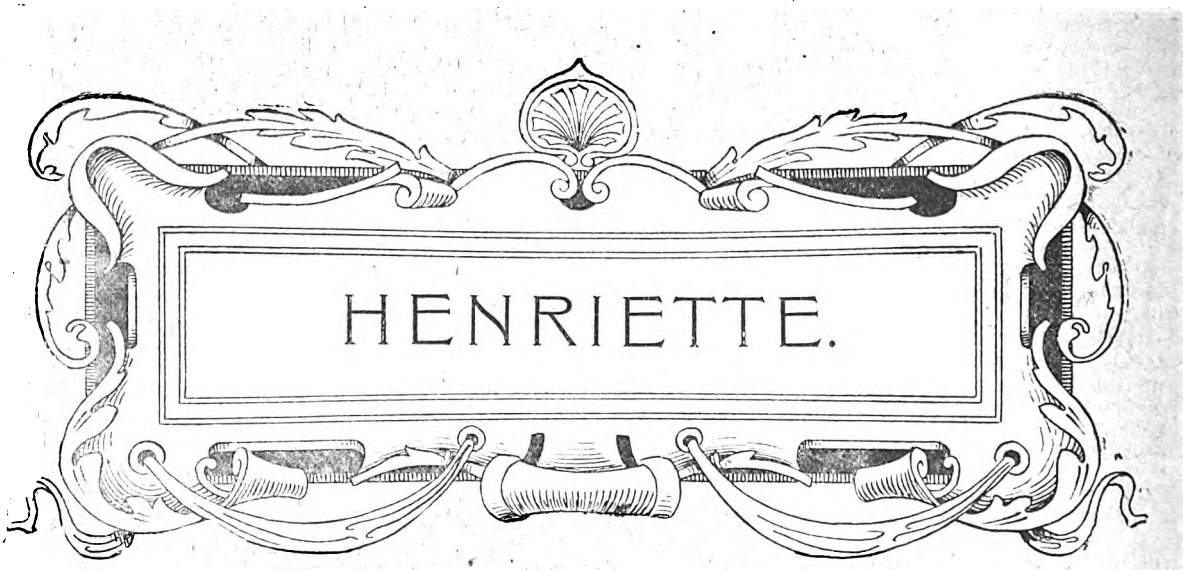

HENRIETTE.

DURING a visit to Paris, many years ago, I spent an afternoon in the studio of the famous artist Florent, looking at his wonderful pictures and sketches, and as the light began to fade into twilight, we drew our chairs to the open window and sat looking over the roofs and chimneys away to the river in the distance.

"Now, tell me about the sketch of the girl," I said, after a long silence.

Earlier, while looking through an album, a sketch, done in water-colours, had attracted my attention, and I had asked whose face it was that had so attracted this great man. He looked at it sadly, I thought, and promised to tell me the story connected with it. The face in the picture was not beautiful, nor even pretty, but the eyes were full of expression and sadness, and the mouth, drooping slightly at the corners, seemed never to have known a smile, and yet betrayed a certain sweetness.

"As you could see," began Florent, "she is not pretty. But she is the only woman who has ever really loved me.

"I was twenty-three years old, extremely poor, absolutely unknown and happy. I worked alone in a little room that served me as studio, bedroom and reception-room, and gave lessons on small pay at young ladies' boarding schools.

"Among other places I went twice a week to the school of Madame Martinet, where I taught drawing. One day on entering the class I saw installed in the chair of surveillance a little creature who excited my sympathy at once. A young girl of about nineteen, with brown hair, big eyes and a sad mouth, her slim little figure dressed in an ugly brown gown which did not fit, she was picturesque in her utter forlornness.

"She was there to keep order, a sort of under teacher, but beyond 'Look out, mademoiselle is looking,' whispered several times, the girls paid no attention to her presence. When I left I bowed respectfully to her, and her face lit up with surprise and pleasure, as though she were unaccustomed to being noticed.

"She was called nothing but 'mademoiselle' in the school, and not for months did I learn her name. She seemed to avoid talking with me at the class, and I never met her elsewhere.

"One day in the early spring I was walking along the avenues of the Jardin-des-Plantes, when I saw mademoiselle coming toward me, followed by a mob of little boys crying:

"'Oh, ma'm'selle! Oh! Ma'm'selle!' as though the title were itself a term of reproach. To disperse the crowd was the work of an instant.

"When I turned to the girl she thanked me in a trembling voice, which sounded very near tears. I asked if I might not accompany her home, but she said it was not necessary. She consented, however, to sit down on a bench and regain her spirits.

"I seated myself beside her. She interested me. We talked of the school, of the badness of little boys, of the disagreeable features of our profession. I learned that she was an orphan, poor as I, more isolated even. She looked at me with her melancholy eyes.

"'You will be happy some day, M. Florent. You will be famous, perhaps rich. That ought to make you accept gaily the miseries that come with your present condition. As for me——'

"'Surely you, too, will be happy?'

"'I have nothing to look forward to,' she replied.

"Poor girl! My heart went out toward her. I assured her how much I had wished to make her acquaintance, and asked if we might not meet sometimes where we were as we were both more or less lonely. She appeared astonished, but consented.

"This incident determined a great change in the life of my little friend. As our intimacy grew, Henriette (that was her name) revealed to me a mind which was a treasure without price. She had the purest, rarest soul I ever had imagined. When with her I was perfectly happy. But my love for her was always as that for a sister; the thought of another love did not exist for me, nor did I suppose that it did for her.

"All the spring, summer and autumn I enjoyed her sweet companionship. In the winter we saw less of each other, though she came often to my *atelier*, inspiring me by her admiration and encouragement, to the best efforts in my work.

"One day in April I proposed that we should spend the whole day in the country, as I thought Henriette looked pale and tired. I chose the woods of Verrieres. The sky was blue, the air soft with early spring. I do

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not know what possessed me, but I spoke to her with unusual tenderness, saying more than I meant, showing more devotion than I felt. I asked her if she were content, and I shall never forget the look in her sad, little face as she said:

"'I am happy!'

"I knew then that she loved me, and my conscience was very heavy, for in my heart I felt nothing but the tenderness of a brother or a friend.

"Shortly after that time, I became the victim of a foolish infatuation for an extremely pretty girl. I always intended telling Henriette of Madeleine, but the memory of the day in the woods made me hesitate. I saw less of Henriette, spending my spare time with Madeleine, who, in time, came to return my affection and promised to marry me. I was young and the placid bearing of my little friend deceived me into believing that she noticed nothing in my behaviour, or did not feel my neglect.

"On the other hand, I was deterred from telling Madeleine of my friendship, fearing her railleries. Even then, I felt that she could not understand or appreciate a mind of the purity of Henriette's.

"One day when Madeleine was away I asked Henriette to have lunch with me at my studio. She came, for the first time in months.

"As we were looking through an album of sketches a picture of Madeleine fell out. Henriette gazed long into the face and then looked into my eyes.

"'She is beautiful,' she said. 'Who is she?'

"I could not tell her.

"'She has just a fancy head,' I replied, and she believed me. I was stricken with remorse. Drawing my chair close to hers I took her hands in mine.

"'Henriette, you are so good, so sweet,' I murmured when the door opened and there stood Madeleine.

"She was in a fury of jealous rage.

"'This is the way you work when you tell me you are alone!' she cried. 'And this, I suppose, is my rival. Let me congratulate you, monsieur, on your taste!' And she looked scornfully at Henriette, who had risen and stood pale and still, looking at the newcomer, in whom she recognized the original of the sketch.

"Without a word, with only a look which told me she understood everything, Henriette left us. In that instant I realized all that she was to me and the love that I had thought I felt for the woman still standing in the doorway melted away.

"I dashed out and down the stairs, crying 'Henriette!' She waited for me.

"'Do not speak,' she said. 'I have no claim on you. You are free. You need make no excuses to me. Goodbye, and may you be happy.' She was gone.

"I returned to Madeleine who was still in an ungovernable passion, and we broke our engagement.

"The next day I went to the school, where I learned that mademoiselle had departed the night before, leaving no address. I searched Paris for a trace of her, but found none. For ten years I did not give up the hope of finding her again. Then I became convinced that it was useless to hope further.

"I shall never see her again, tortured by me and lost just as I wished most to retain her. Her face lives in my memory as it looked the last time I saw her. The eyes were full of ineffable sorrow, her whole expression a picture of resigned love, her mouth the outward sign of all her wonderful sweetness. A rare nature, to be treasured and loved, to be mourned for ever if lost."

F. M. Stewart.

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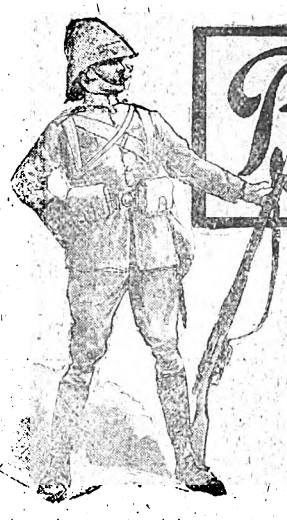

Briton or Boer?

By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

INTRODUCTION.

For years past Britain and the Transvaal have been spoiling for a fight, and it was left to that well-known author, Mr. George Griffith, to write this strong and exciting serial nearly four years ago graphically describing a huge war between the two countries.

The story, coming so soon after the Jameson Raid, was read with unusual interest.

Now that Briton and Boer are in deadly conflict it will be interesting to read the story, and see how far the imagination of the author has actually come true.

SUMMARY OF OPENING CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.—The scene opens on the Rand. It is the eve of Amajuba day, and a State ball is being given. To this comes Prince Paul Regna, a Polish nobleman, and his daughter, Princess Vavara. They are introduced to Dr. Leyds.

CHAPTER II.—Dr. Leyds returns to Pretoria to attend a midnight consultation at the Government buildings. The Prince's rooms are in the Grand Hotel opposite. By tapping the wires, which cross the street at this point, the Prince and his daughter overhear all that goes on, and telegraph the result by secret code to Europe.

CHAPTERS III. AND IV. — Amajuba day dawns. The Secretary accompanies the Prince and Princess to Krugersdorp, where, from the base of the Monument of Independence, the President makes a great proclamation. The Convention of London is abrogated, the absolute independence of the South African Republic is declared; the President unfurls a Union Jack and rends it to pieces. So the storm bursts!

CHAPTERS V. AND VI.—On the following day Major-General Carrington learns at Buluwayo that all the wires have been cut between Rhodesia and the south and east. He concludes that this is due to Boer hostility, and prepares to meet it. Meanwhile a powerful British squadron appears unexpectedly in Delagoa Bay, and Lieutenant Ferris is sent ashore to take possession of the telegraph station.

CHAPTERS VII. AND VIII.—A Russian squadron is in the Bay at the same time. The flagship *Navarin* fires on the British destroyer *Thrasher*. Admiral Dale takes this as an act of war. There is a battle and the Russian squadron is defeated and captured. Michael Ostroff seeks to escape in the *Sokol*. He is taken prisoner, and important dispatches are found in his possession. Admiral Dale calls a council of war.

CHAPTERS IX. AND X.—General Carrington's campaign in the Matoppo Hills ends in the defeat of the rebels, the remnant of whom take refuge in a kopje, which is surrounded. A Rhodesian trooper and a private of Lancers capture a Boer disguised as a Kaffir, and take him into camp.

CHAPTERS XI. AND XII.—The Boer-Kaffir tells General Carrington that the Dutch have risen against British rule all over South Africa. The Matabele surrender, and give up the disguised Boers among them. These are shot. As the force moves southward the scouts are met by a girl, who tells them that the Boers have invaded Rhodesia and are marching on Buluwayo. Meanwhile, Admiral Dale informs the captains of the squadron in Delagoa Bay that no help can be expected from home, and that he intends to take absolute command of the coast.

CHAPTERS XIII. AND XIV.—General Carrington commissions Major Bryan to organise the Matabele Legion, and lead it against a detachment of the Boers lying in wait in a group of kopjes farther down the road. Major Bryan discovers that the girl who has brought the news is his sweetheart, Madge Morrison. Her people have all been killed, and he determines to avenge them. He sends a party of Matabele under Umzilizi on ahead to parley with the Boers.

CHAPTERS XV. AND XVI.—The Boers are surrounded in the kopjes and thrown into complete confusion by means of dynamite charge carried into the air by rockets, and allowed to fall among the rocks. Sergeant Bethell shoots Commandant Potgieter at the Maxim, which is taken. Major Bryan turns it on the Boers, who have been driven into the road.

CHAPTER XVI. (*continued*).

As he spoke he fired three answering shots, and then he pressed his thumb hard against the spring and turned the barrel of the Maxim on to the groups in the road as a fireman might turn a hose on to a fire.

Macpherson's gun spoke at the same time, and in a few minutes all was over. A score or so of the panic-stricken Boers escaped the incessant cross-hail of the two torrents of bullets, but only to be shot down and stabbed by the ambushed Matabele. Within less than an hour of the rising of the first rocket the only remnants of the Boer Commando which had manned the kopjes in the hope of shooting down the British columns from behind the stones, consisted of about half-a-dozen men, who, terror-stricken at the effect of the first rocket-flight, had taken to their heels while there was yet time, and were already well on their way towards Tuli with a most amazing but not altogether inaccurate version of the "ghost work and trickery" which had blown up all the kopjes and let the *duivels* of hell loose on the Commando to devour it.

Major Bryan's lesson in night-attacks had been, at any rate, taught thoroughly by the time that he took his thumb from the spring, and, by ceasing fire, told Macpherson that he could do the same. But there were very few who had learnt it, and they were found to be so sorely wounded that it was very doubtful whether they would live long enough to impart it to those whom it most concerned.

It was still nearly an hour on the right side of midnight, so he took advantage of the moonlight to send Umzilizi to thoroughly explore the Boer positions and collect all the rifles and ammunition and unwounded horses that could be found. Then, after a couple of hours rest and an earnest consultation with his most trusted subordinates, he decided to take the tide of victory at the flood, push on with his whole force and the two Maxims along the dozen miles or so of road that separated him from Tuli, and fall upon the Boer position there in the mystic hour before the dawn.

About two o'clock the column was re-formed, the wounded Boers were placed on hastily-constructed litters borne by Matabele bearers, and the march was accomplished without incident. To his amazement, and perhaps not a little to his disappointment, Major Bryan found Tuli laid waste and deserted, save only for a few natives, who were placidly hunting about the smoking ruins of the hotels and stores, seeking diligently for what the Boers and the fire might have left behind them.

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CHAPTER XVII.

The Anniversary of Doornkop.

The events which immediately followed Major Bryan's victory, and the teaching of the first of several such lessons in tactics which the Boers were fated to learn, important as they seemed at the time to the actors in them, must nevertheless be passed over with little more than the bare mention of them, since it is now necessary to proceed with as little delay as possible to the narration of the far more momentous events which were about to happen in the south.

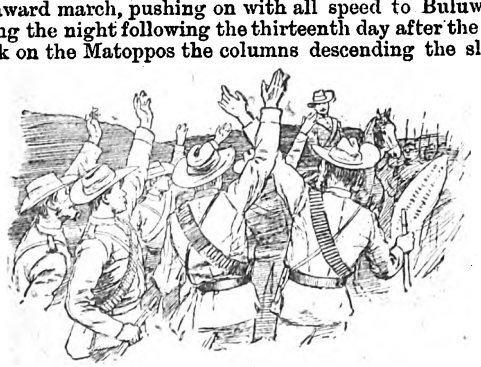
When he had satisfied himself that the Boers had definitely deserted Tuli, he came to the conclusion that one of two things must have happened. Either they had been suddenly recalled south, possibly by the news of a British invasion in force; or, believing the country behind them quite safe, they had destroyed the post and gone on up the road to Puri, to take their share in the attack on Buluwayo. It was just possible that they might have divided their forces, and that some of them might have gone via Maklutsi to attack the Mangwe Pass, but in that case he was content to leave them, since by the time they got there the fate of Buluwayo would probably have been decided.

He therefore made up his mind to press on up the Puri road, and, if possible, catch the Boers between General Carrington's forces and his own. After a halt among the ruins of Tuli, and a hasty breakfast on such meagre supplies as he had with him, he threw out a strong body of runners to scour the country on both sides of the road, and then set his column in order and started.

At Baboon Hill a much needed halt of twelve hours was made. Another day's march completed the long and toilsome journey, and just before sunset the Matabele Legion, headed by its gallant leader, marched amidst the acclamations of the troopers into Puri where General Carrington, thanks to Miss Madge Morrison's skilful guidance, had surprised one of the Boer columns and cut it to pieces during a night attack.

Here Major Bryan received the General's hearty congratulations on the brilliant success of his expedition, and had the still pleasanter satisfaction of telling his sweetheart that the promise he had made her by the Pioneer Road had been fulfilled to the letter—all of which and much more that it would be pleasant to describe in detail must unfortunately be left to the doubtless adequate imagination of my readers.

The next day the combined forces commenced their northward march, pushing on with all speed to Buluwayo. During the night following the thirteenth day after the first attack on the Matoppos the columns descending the slope



The Legion, headed by its leader, marched into Puri.

of the hills heard heavy and continuous firing from the direction of the town.

This, of course, instantly banished all thoughts of rest or sleep. It was well-known that considerably over a thousand Boers with two seven-pounders and probably machine guns as well had left Puri for the north before General Carrington's force arrived. Against the attack of such a force the defence of Buluwayo were terribly inadequate. It seemed, indeed, a marvel how it could have held out so long.

And yet when the explanation became known it was very simple. Overmatched as they were in numbers, the defenders of the southern capital of Rhodesia were men who knew no alternative to putting their backs against the wall and dying fighting. On the other hand the Boers were by no means as much in their element in attack as they were in defence, and there was no approach to the town save over ground that had been carefully cleared of every scrap of cover, and to cross this under a hail of bullets from rifles, Maxims, and Gatlings was a task that the peasant soldiers of the Republic were soon proved to have very little stomach for.

The shells came screaming through the air, and dropping in the very midst of their camp.

Hence, after several attempts, both by night and day, to get through the zone of fire, the Boers had contented themselves with holding the roads and cutting off the town until famine should compel surrender or reinforcements should come from the South. But now, instead of reinforcements, had come the news of the crushing defeats of Selindila and Puri, and the abandonment of Tuli in obedience to imperative orders from Pretoria.

The positions were thus reversed, and the Boers saw every chance of becoming the besieged instead of the besiegers unless they could break down the obstinate resistance of the devoted garrison of Buluwayo, capture the town, and then make a rapid movement southward on the Mangwe Pass and join hands with the force which by this time ought to have taken it, and so cleared the road to the Boer base of operations at Palapye—out of which they had driven King Khama with very little trouble and less ceremony about a fortnight before.

They had, therefore, made up their minds for a general attack on the wearied and weakened garrison, and the firing heard by the approaching columns was the cannonade preparatory to the assault, which was to be made at dawn on the following day—the Second of January, 1897, and the anniversary of the Jameson Raid.

But the assault was never made, for when the dawn came it showed them column after column of mounted troopers, infantry, artillery, Cape Boys, and well-armed, orderly Matabele debouching from the hills; and as soon as the light was strong enough for precise aim, General Carrington's mountain batteries began to speak, and the seven-pounder shells came screaming through the air from their rear, and dropping with most unpleasant precision in the very midst of their camp on the Tuli road.

At the same moment the fire from the forts round the now relieved town burst out with renewed vigour, and the would-be besiegers speedily saw that for them there was nothing but *sauvé qui peut*.

What followed was rather a stampede than a battle. The Boers, caught between the town and the columns under General Carrington, forsook their waggons, guns, and stores, flung themselves on their horses, and went away helter-skelter to the south-west to gain the main road before they were cut off from it.

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The astute General had not the slightest objection to their doing this. He knew that the sixty miles of road between Buluwayo and Mangwe were sprinkled with forts held by men whose Maxims and shell-guns would give a very good account of them as they passed, and, always supposing that the Mangwe Pass itself was still held by Captain Murray and Mr. Selous, there could but be two alternatives for the enemy—surrender or annihilation.

The relief of Buluwayo practically ended the disastrous attempt made by the Northern Division of the Boer forces to crush the British forces in Rhodesia, and take possession of the long coveted territory.

When all too late, it was seen that a gross tactical error had been made. It had been believed that the Rhodesians, impoverished by the rinder-pest and exhausted by the long Matabele campaign, would have fallen an easy prey to the commando of four thousand Boers, who had crossed the frontier on the night of Independence Day, and occupied Palapye, Fort Elebi, and Tuli, almost without resistance.

But, as the events just narrated showed, the victory of the Nuanetsi and the well-planned and rapidly executed operations which had followed it, had completely upset all their calculations.

He ordered a white handkerchief to be tied to a rifle barrel, and waved aloft.

Had it not been for Madge Morrison's desperate night-ride, and the timely warning she conveyed to General Carrington, everything might have been different. But now, at the end of a fortnight's campaign, Pieter Cronje, the victor of Potchefstroom* and Doornkop, who commanded the expedition, to his astonishment and disgust saw himself outgeneraled, and out-witted, and out-fought by an enemy whom every Boer had taught his children to despise since the dark day of Amajuba; and here he was, beaten at every point, riding for his life at the head of the remnant of his force, away from the all important position which another twelve hours would probably have given over to him.

At daybreak he had had about fifteen hundred men, two seven-pounders and three Maxims under his command; by nightfall he had less than a thousand men, many of them wounded, mounted on horses that could scarcely stand, with bandoliers empty and hardly a drink of water or a mouthful of food among them.

In front of him were the guns of Fig-Tree Fort; behind him were General Carrington's victorious troopers, and all along both sides of the road the Bush was alive with Cape Boys and the dusky warriors of the Matabele Legion.

Under such conditions no self-respecting Boer could be expected to fight, and as soon as the seven-pounders from Fig Tree Fort opened fire and began sending shell after shell into them as they straggled wearily along the road his men plainly told him that they had had enough, and that he must surrender.

It was a bitter thing to do, but there was no help for it. His angry thoughts went back to the wild, bleak slopes which stretched from Doornkop down to Hendrik Brink's farm at Vlakfontein, and to the scene by the little house on the veld, with the row of trees in front of it, where Jameson and his band of worn-out raiders surrendered to him. Now he was the raider—like them defeated, hemmed in, and worn out to the last stage of exhaustion even as they had been. That was only a year ago to-day, so quickly had time brought its revenge!

With a curse that came from the bottom of his heart, he recognised the inevitable, and ordered a white handkerchief to be tied to a rifle barrel and waved aloft.

And so Doornkop was avenged. The fire from the forts ceased instantly, and the cracking of the rifle-shots in the rear and along the two sides of the road quickly died away into silence as the bugle sounded the "Cease fire."

Sergeant Bethell, who was scouting along the western side of the road with the Corporals Dempsey and Hinton, keeping one of the divisions of the Matabele Legion in hand, was just in the act of "drawing a bead" on Commandant Cronje from a convenient elevation as the white flag went up. He lowered his rifle and looked round with an expression of the most profound disgust, and said:

"Well, I'm darned! Seems as though I was always going to get left in this business. Guess I took a bit too long over that sight; but, by gosh, I had him sweet!"

"What did yer want to look at the bally flag for at all till yer'd let her go? Who was to know yer'd seen it?" growled Corporal Dempsey. "Yer don't think either of us was going to give yer away, did yer, Old Ebenezer?"

This nickname, by-the-way, was a derivative from "Little Bethell." The New Englander stood about six foot two in his stockings.

"Not you, Cocky," he answered rather gravely, "but I guess none of us would think much more of ourselves for dropping even a low-down cuss like that after the white flag had gone up. Waal, anyhow," he went on in a more cheerful tone, "guess you Britishers have got the bulge on them this time. Maybe they won't gas so much about the colour of the British flag after this."

* It was this man who, in the War of Independence, disobeyed the orders of General Joubert, and deliberately kept the starving garrison and women and children of Potchefstroom in ignorance of the fact that an eight days' armistice had been concluded during which all the beleaguered towns were to be allowed to re-victual. In the end they surrendered—starved out.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Prince Paul on the Situation.

It was New Year's Eve in Pretoria, and Mr. Secretary Leyds had snatched an hour or two from the ever-multiplying cares of State to accept Prince Paul Regna's invitation to dinner in his private room at the Grand Hotel.

Although their acquaintance was little more than a fortnight old, so far as the ordinary computation of time went, he was already quite on a footing of *ami de famille*, to use a convenient Gallicism. There was a something, which somehow he had never tried even to analyse, in the personalities of the courtly, high-bred exile and his daughter, which had attracted him as he had never been attracted before, and drawn him almost insensibly into an intimacy which a fortnight or so ago he would have considered impossible.

In the Prince he had found a man of perfect breeding, wide experience, acute perception, and frank and ready sympathy, and in the Princess, not only the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, but a nature artless and innocent, and yet cultivated to a degree, that raised her infinitely above the women he was accustomed to meet with in the somewhat mixed society amidst which his lot was at present cast.

As he sat down to the exquisitely appointed table, it seemed as though some fairy enchantment had within the few moments that had passed since the door of the room had closed, transported him from the capital of the Transvaal into the infinitely more congenial atmosphere of one of the centres of the highest European civilisation, and for the time being he might have been ten thousand miles away from the Executive Chamber across the road where only an hour or so before he had been engaged in a battle of wits

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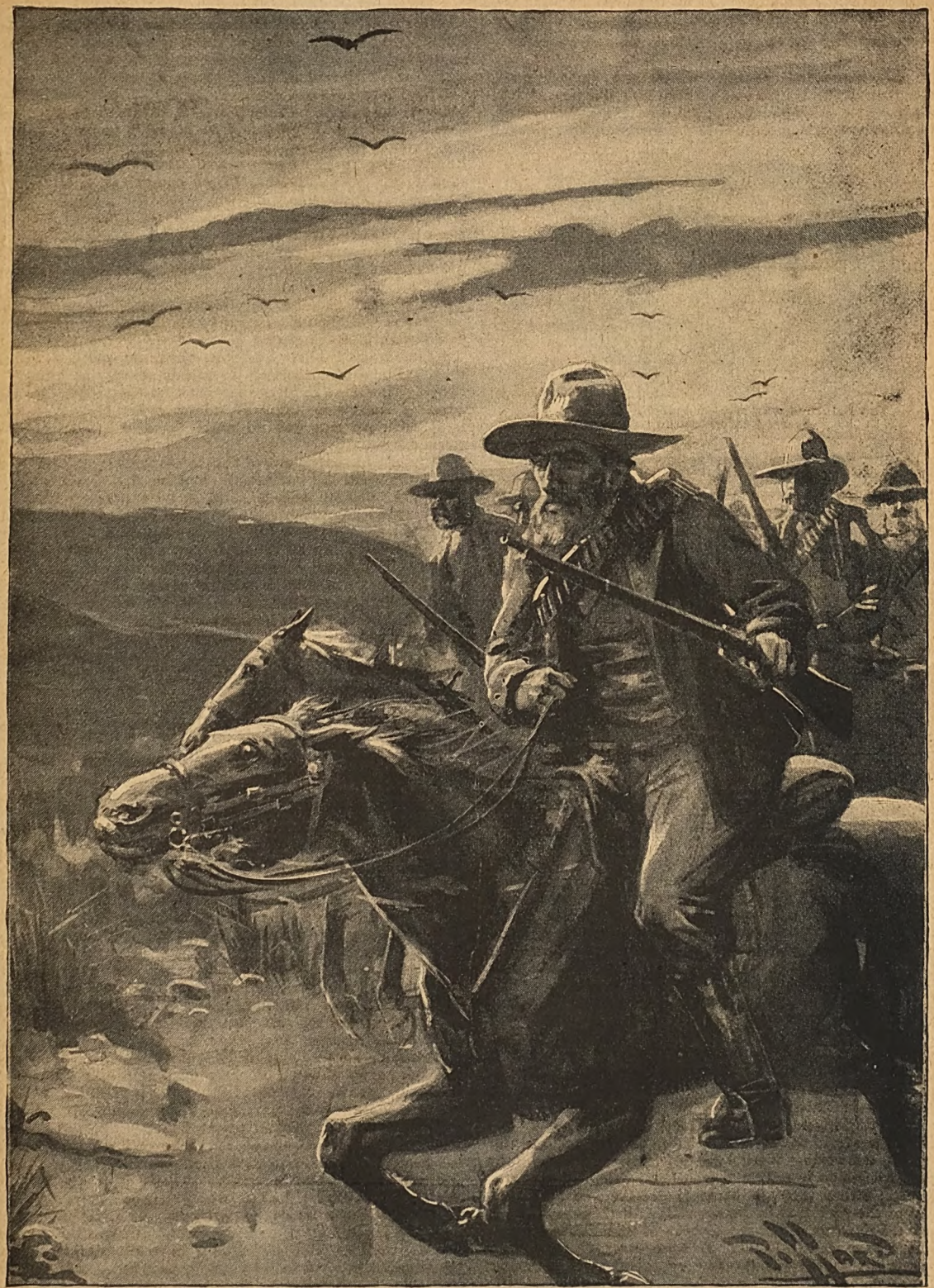

The Boers forsook their waggons, guns, and stores, flung themselves on their horses, and went away helter-skelter to gain the main road before they were cut off. Pieter Cronje, who commanded the expedition, riding for his life at the head of the remnant of his force.

with men who punctuated their arguments with puffs of rank tobacco smoke and frequent and copious expectorations.

The only attendant was the silent and smooth-faced Dmitri, who, as the Prince had assured him, did not understand a word of English, and hence, as their conversation was invariably conducted in that language, might as well

The Princess was sitting opposite to him, dressed to perfection.

have been a deaf mute so far as any possible danger of repetition was concerned.

Under the circumstances it was of course inevitable that after the elegant platitudes of the first few minutes the conversation should quickly veer round to the great subject which was then engrossing the attention of every one in South Africa from the Zambesi to Table Bay. In fact, any conversation, save on the one all-engrossing topic, could hardly have been anything but palpably artificial and almost wholly uninteresting.

It began by a most artless and naturally expressed question from the Princess, who was sitting opposite to him, dressed, as usual, to perfection, and looking her loveliest.

"May I ask, Mr. Secretary, whether there are any new developments in the situation that your necessary diplomatic reserve will allow you to tell us of?" she said as Dmitri silently and deftly removed the soup plates.

"There is very little of diplomacy or reserve necessary now, Princess," he said. "From now to the end it can hardly be anything but hard hitting and straight shooting. In fact, we diplomatists, if you choose to call us so, have finished our work for the present. The question between ourselves and the English has to be argued out on the battle-field, not in the council-chamber."

"Well," said the Prince, holding his glass of sherry between his eye and the shaded table lamp, "there could hardly be room for much more diplomacy after the President's speech at Krugersdorp. By-the-way, are you not beginning to come round to my way of thinking with regard to the Germans? Don't you think it possible that I may have been right when I told you ten days or so ago that their interest in the affairs of the Republic was a good deal more commercial than sentimental?"

"Sentimental!" echoed the Princess with one of her sweet, low laughs. "I should think that one might as well expect to find sentiment in an Englishman as in a German—music and beer of course apart. If Napoleon were alive now he would hardly have looked across the English channel to find his nation of shopkeepers."

"Yes, I'm afraid that is not far from the truth," said the Secretary, answering them both at once. "At any rate I am compelled to admit that one of two things must have happened; either they deliberately deceived us as to the arrival of the squadron in Delagoa Bay, or they may have got wind before we did of the arrival of the British ships, and kept very carefully out of harm's way. How very extraordinary it was that the Russian squadron should have come to such terrible grief as it did! What on earth could it have been doing there at all?"

"Goodness knows!" said the Prince, watching Dmitri filling his champagne glass as intently as though that were a much more interesting matter than the capture of the squadron which he had himself brought into the bay.

"The only feasible explanation that I can see is that someone must have betrayed your counsels in Europe, and Russia, knowing Delagoa Bay to be, as it is justly called, the Keyhole of Africa, thought there might as well be a Russian key in it as any other. But what I personally should like to know—merely, of course, as a matter of personal curiosity—is how on earth that English fleet dropped, as it were, from the clouds at the very moment when it was least wanted."

"Or most wanted, papa, from the enemy's point of view?" the Princess suggested with a spice of wickedness in her tone.

"I am glad to hear you say 'enemy,'" laughed the Secretary. "I should be sorry to think you have any sympathy with these English."

"You know I have told you that my mother was a Russian," she said, looking up rather sharply at him. "I hope by this time England has paid for that little victory either in Europe or Asia. By-the-way, Mr. Secretary, how is it that we can get no news from the rest of the world?"

"I'm afraid that is one of the consequences of 'the little victory,' as you call it," he said, looking straight down on to his plate. "I can only explain it by supposing that the cables are either cut or entirely in the hands of the English. That, however, was really to be expected. When the Germans failed us at Delagoa Bay every South African port would naturally be closed for the time being by the English warships, and, equally, of course, the cables would be at their mercy; but what I must confess does surprise me is that we have had no news from the Commando in the North since we ordered the evacuation of Tuli."

"That, I think between ourselves, was a mistake, if I may be allowed to say so," said the Prince. "I should have thought you would have had plenty of men on the eastern frontier to repel any possible incursion of the English Naval Brigade from Delagoa Bay without withdrawing your men from the North."

"Personally, I quite agree with you, Prince," said the Secretary, "but you know the Boers are not like regularly drilled and disciplined troops. An army should have no opinions save those of its generals, but in our commandos every man has his own opinion and doesn't hesitate to express it. I'm afraid, if the truth must be told, our worthy burghers took fright at the accounts they heard of the English ships. You see most of them are as ignorant as children about naval matters. Not one in a hundred—or perhaps a thousand—has ever seen a warship, and they seem to have got the idea that every one of them carries an army on board.

"Then, again, there is no denying the fact that the English sailors and marines are much more difficult fellows to tackle, even on land, than the English regulars, and they certainly got the best of our burghers in that skirmish at Kaapmuiden before they blew up the bridge over the Koomati and closed the railway to the coast. Our men didn't seem to understand their tactics at all. Of course, they can come no farther than that, but it must be admitted that the moral effect is anything but a good one."

"And have you settled your difficulty with the Orange Free State yet?" asked the Princess. "I am afraid that has been giving you a good deal of trouble hasn't it?"

"Yes," replied the Secretary. "It is quite needless for me to be anything but frank with you, knowing how entirely your sympathies are with us. As a matter of fact, it has delayed our operations for a full fortnight. If it had not been for that we ought to have had Kimberley and the whole line down to Beaufort by this time, and the Free State burghers ought to have been well across the Natal border; instead of which no concerted movement has been

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possible, and, except for Cronje's expedition to Buluwayo, we have done a great deal more talking than fighting."

"Still, I suppose that Basuto question is really a very serious one for the Free State, isn't it? I have heard that they have boasted of being able to put twenty or thirty thousand armed and mounted men into the field," said the Prince, looking inquiringly at him.

"There ought not to have been any difficulty," said the Secretary, not very good-humouredly. "There was no danger at all to be expected from that quarter, provided that our envoys did their duty properly."

"Or provided that other envoys had not got there before them with more liberal promises and better filled pockets," said the Prince meaningly.

"Ah!" said the Princess with a little shake of the head. "I see you are inclined to mount your hobby again, papa, or, perhaps, if one might use the expression, I should rather say your favourite bugbear."

"And that?" asked the Secretary, looking across the table at her.

"Oh, don't you know?" she said. "Why, Cecil Rhodes, of course."

And as she uttered the name of evil omen she lifted her champagne glass to her lips, took a little sip, and set it down again, saying: "There's confusion to his politics! You can hardly refuse to drink a toast like that, Mr. Secretary."

"I drink it with all my heart," he said, draining his glass at a draught. "I would give a good deal to know where he is and what he is doing just now."

"Hobby or no hobby," said the Prince, "I must say that I believe I am right in thinking that, in spite of his mysterious disappearance from the scene of action, he is still the most dangerous man in South Africa—or out of it, whichever he may happen to be. No one knows the power of money better than he does, and no one can use it more skilfully or more unscrupulously.

"Who, again, save the man who arranged the amalgamation of De Beers could have managed to transfer every shilling of his interests and those of his associates on the Rand to France without your hearing a word about it. Depend upon it, Mr. Secretary, Cecil Rhodes knew of your contemplated declaration of independence a good deal longer beforehand even than you knew of the Jameson Raid."

"And what if he did?" asked the Secretary, with admirably simulated unconcern. "After all, with all his millions and all his ability, he is a broken man, disgraced abroad and repudiated at home."

"My dear Mr. Secretary," said the Prince quite earnestly, leaning over the corner of the table and tapping him gently on one sleeve with his forefinger, "as one who has your cause very near at heart, let me earnestly beg of you and your colleagues in the Government not to allow yourselves to be deluded by any such false conviction.

"I hope I may remind you without offence that I had served my apprenticeship in diplomacy while you were still at school. In days that are now gone by for good it was my destiny to be intimately concerned in some of the most delicate and subtle intrigues that ever threatened or assured the peace of nations, and the most valuable lesson that my experience teaches me is: Beware of the man who is at the same time strong and silent.

"It is not your orators and mob-leading demagogues who really move the world. They only move the winds above it, which blow one way to-day and another to-morrow. No, no; believe me, Cecil Rhodes may well prove a more dangerous enemy to you than ever England herself. England by this time is probably hopelessly involved in European complications, and, saving for this mysterious fleet, unable to stretch out a hand to save her African dominions. But Cecil Rhodes is free, desperate, and without scruple. He has millions at command, and he is the man to use them to the last shilling to satisfy his ambitions or to crush his enemies—and you know, Doctor, he has no love for the Pretorian Government.

"I don't wish to play the part of an alarmist, but it is quite within the bounds of possibility that even now his agents may be buying ships and hiring men in Canada and Australia and South America, or wherever adventurers may be found, and I need not remind you that there is no law to stop him if he chooses to do so."

"In short, Prince," said the Secretary, with a perceptible harshness which he tried, in vain, to conceal, "you think we shall have to deal not only with the English in South Africa but with an invasion from over-sea?"

"I would rather put it," said the Prince in his most persuasive tone, "that I wish you to be fully on your guard."

The Secretary laughed, not very mirthfully perhaps, and said:

"I quite see your point, Prince, and it is very good of you to raise it, but we shall have South Africa before Cecil Rhodes, or anyone else, can land any force worth considering."

"I'm sure I most sincerely hope so," said the Princess, who for the last few minutes had been doing a good deal of thinking in silence.

"And I, too," said the Prince, "most earnestly. Come in."

The door opened and Dmitri came in carrying a bottle of champagne in an ice-bucket. In the other hand he held an envelope which, after he had put the bucket on the floor, he presented with silent deference to the Secretary.

"Pardon me," the latter said as he opened it and looked at the scrap of paper it contained. "Ay, I was afraid so! It is from the Executive. My presence is required across the way at once. Princess, and you, Prince, may I ask your indulgence for the misfortunes of my position?"

"How very unfortunate!" said the Princess, rising and holding out her hand to him with a gracious smile. "Still, in times like these, everything must give way to affairs of State. If you can rejoin us later on I hope you will."

As soon as the door had closed behind him, and they had sat down again, the Prince leaned back in his chair and said in Russian:

"Well, Dmitri, do you know why the Secretary was called away so suddenly? Is there any news?"

"Yes, Nobleness," he replied in his grave, slow voice.

"Do you know why the Secretary was called away?"

"Johannesburg has broken out into revolt, and there are rumours of a native rising."

"Ah," said the Princess, "that is news indeed. I suppose the next we shall get will be that twenty or thirty thousand Basutos have crossed the Free State border. Evidently something interesting is going to happen."

(To be continued.)

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "The Optimist," by Herbert Morrah, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. W. J. Bristow, 119 Stratford Road, Plaistow, Essex. Attempts for this week's prize may deal with ANY SUBJECT and must reach the *Storyette* Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, April 16th. Post-cards only, please.

Did He Do Likewise?

A YOUNG curate was once asked to take a class of girls of about fifteen or sixteen, which had formerly been taken by a lady.

After a time the young clergyman consented, but insisted on being properly introduced to the class.

Accordingly the next Sunday the superintendent took him to the girls for this purpose, and addressing them, said:

"Young ladies, I wish to introduce to you the Rev. Mr. Chirp, who will in future be your teacher. I would like you to tell him what your former teacher did, so that he can go on in the same way."

Immediately a demure young miss of sixteen rose and said:

"The first thing our teacher did was to kiss us all round." W. J. B.

The Lady Didn't Smoke.

A LADY, spending the summer at a fishing village on the South Coast, asked one of the male residents:

"How far is it to Mr. Dibson's house?"

The sea-faring man pulled his top-knot politely, and answered:

"Just about a dog's trot, mum."

"How far is that?" the lady asked again.

The man hesitated an instant, as if searching in his mind for an exact measure of distance, and then replied:

"About as far as it would take ye to smoke an even pipeful o' terbacker, mum!" E. T. B.

Not Much of a Father.

IN one of our large drapery houses is employed a young man of diminutive stature and somewhat feminine appearance, although a tip-top salesman.

One day, not long since, a little girl was sent to the shop to make some purchases, and it fell to the lot of this young man to attend her.

She was a mere bunch of feminity, not able to talk plainly. She asked if he had any "totten flannel."

He replied that he had, and asked how much she wanted.

"I don't know," was the reply.

"Well, what do you want it for?"

"Want to make papa a shirt."

"Well, how big is your papa? Is he as big as me?"

"Big as you?" said the little maiden, "I should think he is; he wouldn't be much of a papa if he wasn't." E. N. J.

Didn't Do Him Any Good.

"AND remember," said the doctor to the young man, after giving him a prescription, "if you wish to get well, take only one cigar after each meal."

"Very well," said the patient sadly, and went away.

A few weeks later he returned to say that his health was greatly improved. "But I wish, doctor," he added, "that you could let me off that cigar after each meal. You see I had never smoked until you told me to, and I don't really think I am any the better for it."

F. L. S.

The Archbishop Again.

DR. TEMPLE, the Archbishop of Canterbury, entered an East-end church one night, and standing in a back pew joined in the singing of a Moody and Sankey hymn.

Next to him stood a working-man, who was singing lustily in tune. The bishop sang lustily also, but not in tune. The working-man stood the discord as long as he could, and then, nudging the bishop, said in a whisper:

"Here, dry up, mister; you're spoiling the show."

B. A. B.

An Appropriate Name.

"I WISH you'd stop calling that boy 'Willie,'" the old gentleman said irritably, as he looked up from his paper.

"It does seem rather odd to call a young man at college 'Willie,'" she admitted. "I suppose I ought to call him 'Will' or 'William,' but a mother ought to be excusable for holding to the diminutive as long——"

"'Will' wouldn't suit me any better than 'Willie,'" he answered. "I heard from some more of the Cambridge tradesmen to-day, and I want something appropriate. Suppose you call him plain 'Bill.'"

A. M.

A Son of the Sod.

THE rising generation of Irish boys seems to be fairly well informed as to their country's indebtedness to England.

An Irish school inspector the other day was examining a class in geography.

He had put a question regarding longitude, and on receiving a correct answer continued:

"And now what is latitude?"

There was silence for a little. Then an Oliver Twist-like youth, with a broad grin on his honest face, gave the reply:

"Please, sir, we have no latitude in Ireland! The British Government won't allow us any." L. S.

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He Thought So.

Husband (kindly): "My dear, you have nothing decent to wear, have you?"

Wife (with alacrity): "No, indeed I haven't; not a thing. I'd be ashamed to be seen anywhere. My newest party dress has been worn three times already."

Husband: "Yes, that's just what I told Bliffkins when he offered me two tickets for the opera to-night. I knew that if I took them they'd only be wasted, so I just took one. Well, I must hurry."

J. H.

Cheerful.

A lady visiting at Athlone, Ireland, was laid up for some time with influenza. When convalescent, her hostess suggested a drive, to brighten up her spirits, and invited her to say where she would like to go.

The guest selected Auburn.

Accordingly, a car was hired, and the Irish jarvey received his directions.

After a very long round the hostess declared he was not taking them in the right direction.

"'Deed, and I'm not, ma'am, for there's nothing there but the gorse. I'm going to take the stranger to show her the new cemetery."

W. G.

A Catchy Story.

Once, when in Paris, Napoleon paid a visit to a hospital for old soldiers. Among the inmates was an old man who had lost an arm. The Emperor asked him:

"Where did you lose your arm?"

"At Austerlitz, sire."

"Then, no doubt, you curse the Emperor and your country for your fate?"

"On the contrary," said the veteran, "for the Emperor and my country I would sacrifice my other arm."

"I can hardly believe it," said the Emperor.

The soldier immediately drew a sabre from its sheath and lopped off the other arm.

"A most sublime act of self-sacrifice," said the old lady who had been listening to the yarn, totally forgetting the impossibility of a one-armed man cutting off his remaining arm.

H. A. E.

Making it Worth While.

An Irishman walking along a platform, in counting some money accidentally dropped a sixpence, which rolled down a crack between two of the boards. The Irishman was much put out by his loss, trifling though it was, and went to town in a very bad temper.

Early the next day a friend, while walking by the spot, discovered the Irishman in the act of deliberately dropping a half-crown down the same crack through which he had lost his sixpence. The friend was, of course, much astonished at what he saw, and, desiring to learn why Pat should deliberately, to all appearances, throw away money, inquired his reasons, and was fairly taken off his feet by the following explanation:

"It was this way," said Pat. "It's yesterday I was passin' this way when I lost a sixpence down that hole. Now I rasoned thot it wasn't worth me while to get under the platform for a sixpence, but last night a scheme struck me, and I'm dropping down the half-crown to make it worth me while."

T. P.

Retort Courteous.

At a dinner party recently a dude found himself seated between two young men who had just started a merchant tailoring establishment.

"I—aw—have been placed between two—aw—tailors, it seems," said his dudelets.

"Yes," replied one of the young men; "you see, we are beginners, and at present can only afford one goose between us."

A. W. H.

An Awful Mouth.

A Lanarkshire farmer and one of his men were recently driving two carts of hay to the stable of a small country inn.

After they had arrived, and emptied their carts, the farmer proposed that they should go in and have a drink.

The carter assented, and in they went.

"What are you for, Jock?" asked the farmer, fumbling in his pocket for the necessary coin.

"A'll tak' a moothfu' o' beer," replied Jock, with great gusto.

"You'll tak' naethin' o' the kind," rejoined the farmer. "Ye'll get a quart here, but nae mair."

A. S. B.

A Sharp Answer.

A well-known bishop was making his annual round among the Sunday Schools of his diocese, examining the children and encouraging them.

One Sunday, after having spoken on the lesson, whose subject was "Jacob's Dream," he said:

"Now, is there any question you would like to ask me?"

For a moment there was silence, then a small girl on the front bench spoke forth in a timid voice:

"Please, my lord, if the angels had wings, why would they need a ladder?"

This question was so unexpected that the poor bishop did not know what to reply, and was racking his brains for an answer, when the eager voice of a farmer's little daughter cried out out:

"Please, my lord, I know."

"Why was it, my dear?" asked the relieved bishop.

"Because they were moulting."

A. R.

Waiting His Turn.

Two Yorkshire farmers lived together as partners. By-and-by they dissolved partnership and one moved away some miles distant.

After a time the son of his former partner paid them a visit. It was dinner time when he arrived. But for some cause or other they did not invite him to join them.

The farmer asked the boy no end of questions: how many horses they had, and how many sheep and pigs.

At last the boy said:

"We have one sow that has fourteen little pigs."

"Hey!" said the farmer.

"Yes," said the boy, "but there are only thirteen paps."

"Well," said the farmer, "how does the fourteenth do?"

"Just as I am doing now; sits and looks on while the others feed."

M. G.

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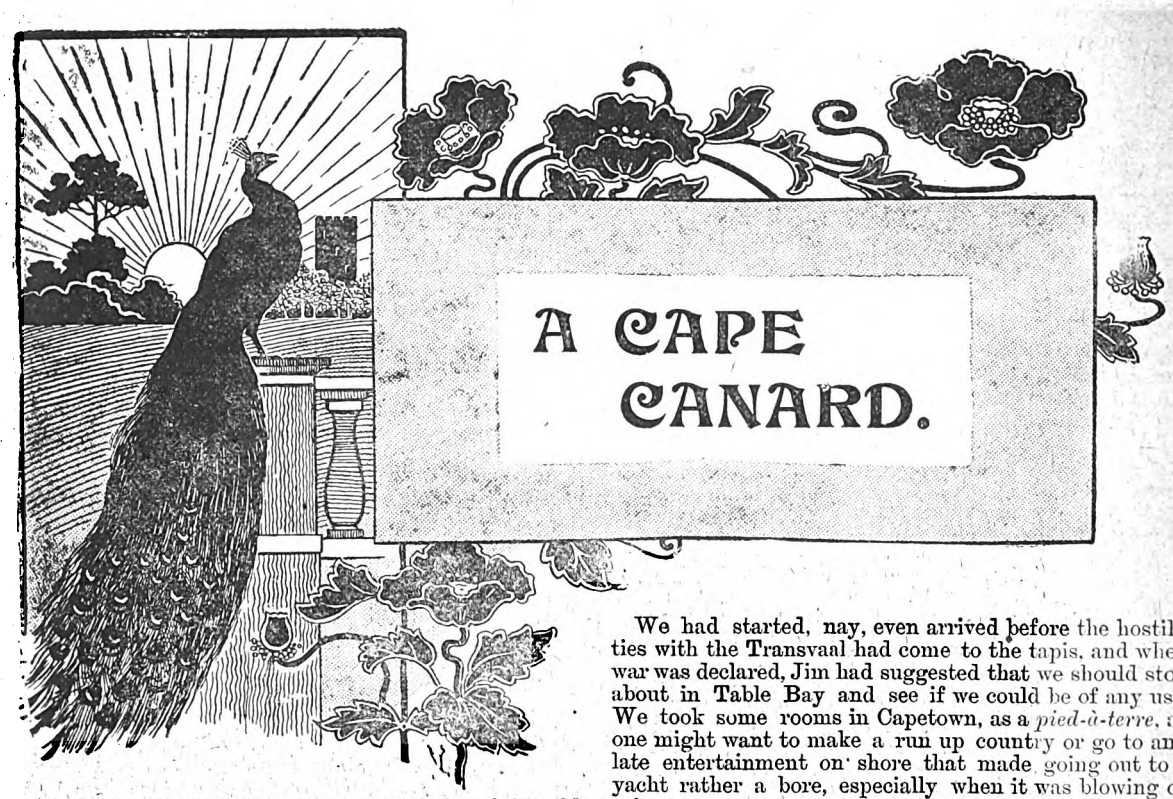

A CAPE CANARD.

TRUTH is stranger than fiction. In spite of this old saying I have heard cynics affirm that it entirely depends on the capabilities of the liar, or in other words, the author of the fiction. Well, however that may be, within the last few weeks a story got about that not only was credited by an enormous number of people in England, but even the greater organs of the press commented on it, and for twenty-four hours no one really knew whether the tale was true or false.

One enterprising evening paper published special editions at eleven in the morning, and announced that it was its own particular correspondent who had wired the news in advance of all his *confrères*.

It was to this effect that "Sir Redvers Buller, the brave and clever General to whom all our hopes of success in this terrible war were attached had been assassinated by a dastardly spy, shot at from an upper building as he landed at Capetown."

The War Office officials shook their heads when inquiries were made. They had had no such information and they spoke vaguely of the iniquity of publishing such reports.

"Reports," they said, "that were entirely without any official confirmation," and the clerk from whom this statement emanated, seemed to the excited brain of the interviewer to be positively clothed in red tape.

How this news got about seemed a mystery to all—some more immediately interested, even employed detectives to try and find out the origin. All failed, it remained for me, an individual who might vulgarly be described as being at the loose end of a rope to unravel this mystery.

It all came about through my accepting an invitation to go for a yachting cruise to Madeira and the Cape with my old friend and ally Jim Baldwin.

We had started, nay, even arrived before the hostilities with the Transvaal had come to the tapis, and when war was declared, Jim had suggested that we should stop about in Table Bay and see if we could be of any use. We took some rooms in Capetown, as a *pied-à-terre*, as one might want to make a run up country or go to any late entertainment on shore that made going out to a yacht rather a bore, especially when it was blowing or rainy.

By a curious coincidence we had chosen an hotel which was a favourite with several journalists and pressmen of all sorts. With the first whisper of war they seemed to crop up like mushrooms, and among them, an old college chum of mine, Tom Green by name, who at Oxford had gone by the name of the "Image," not because he was like "unto any graven thing," but because his imagination very often got the better of his sense of truth, and he would make the most extraordinary assertions which were afterwards proved to be without foundation.

We foregathered in the smoking-room the very day after the Castle Liner, with Sir Redvers Buller on board, arrived in Table Bay.

I could see he was dying to divulge something, so purposely maintained an air of indifference. At last after some fencing my diplomacy was rewarded.

"What a dreadful thing this is about the General," he began as he lit his pipe.

"I have not heard anything," said I truly enough. "What is it?"

"To tell you the truth, old chap, I don't know whether I ought to let it out, as no one seems to have heard anything here;" he paused, and puffed vigorously, while my curiosity was thoroughly aroused.

"Oh, well," I said, "don't tell me if it is a state secret. I am not at all curious," I added grandly.

"It is not a state secret and I don't suppose it would be really any harm to tell you as you are not on the press, but please first give me your word you won't pass the news on."

"Of course I will," I answered. "What great oath do you want, word of honour, or 'bet a penny,' like the Eton boy."

"It is no joke," he replied gravely; "if it is true, I am

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the only correspondent so far as I can gather, who has got the news, and who has wired it home. I, who am usually thought to be among the small fry, as being in the employ of merely a halfpenny evening shocker."

"Well, here goes my solemn word of honour I'll not repeat what you tell me even to *The Times*," said I half jokingly, half seriously.

"The fact is," he said, knocking the ash out of his pipe, "I have been dying to talk it over with somebody, but nearly all the people in this hotel are either journalists themselves or friends of people connected with the press, so if you really won't let out what I am going to tell you, I will commence at the beginning and spin you the whole yarn."

I could see I was in for one of the "Image's" best, so I stopped him a minute while I rang for whiskeys and sodas for two and refilled my pipe as I sank into the chair I thought most likely to promote comfort, and, shall I whisper it, perhaps sleep. The drinks were brought, and my friend accepted his with a pre-occupied grunt of thanks, only waiting to see the man who had brought them, safely out of the room before he began.

"I was sitting last night in my bedroom, pen in hand, racking my brains for what on earth I could write or wire to my paper when I was disturbed by voices from the room adjoining mine. It was only separated by folding doors, so having keen ears I could hear every word as if it were uttered in my own apartment. Two men were speaking and this is what I heard.

"'It really was a near go. We nearly missed him; if it had not been for you we should not have got within range at all.'

"'I took two shots at him,' said the other voice, 'his being in mufti made him difficult to recognise.'

"The other chuckled (as I thought a sardonic chuckle). 'Ha,' said he, 'thanks to my quick-firer I got no less than six shots at him.'

"For some minutes there was silence broken only by a slight splashing noise as if of water, so I concluded my neighbours were washing.

"Presently the deeper voice broke silence again.

"'By jove!' it said, 'Sir Redvers Buller, that was a lucky shot for me. I got you!'

"'Don't think our friends the Boers could shoot much straighter,' answered the other voice, 'in spite of all the talking about their shooting.'

By this time the "Image's" voice was quite raised in excitement; he was imitating first one voice then the other, just as he had heard them from his room.

"My dear fellow," I began, but he waived me with a flourish of his pipe to be silent.

"Desmond," he said solemnly, "the conversation became much worse for not only had these wretched fellows shot Sir Redvers, but they had contrived to steal his body, and by some method known only to themselves, they were reducing it to I suppose—'nothing!' Listen to the rest.

"'He is a bit thick,' said the deep voice.

"'Oh that does not matter, we can easily reduce him, a little ferricyanide will do the trick.'

"'Have we enough with us?' replied the other.

"'Oh, yes, such a few grains is sufficient,' answered the more hardened of the villains, and I could hear him shaking up some liquid in a bottle.

"The conversation continued, but I could not pay any further heed to it. I seized my pen with feverish zeal, and wrote out my dispatch in cypher.

"'Buller murdered, shot by two Boer spies as he landed, mysterious disappearance of the body, more particulars to follow.'

"I put on my hat and flew, positively flew Desmond, to the post office, and sent it off. You see before you the only man who knows the true particulars of this atrocious crime, and I don't think I am premature if I say, I shall be considered the smartest correspondent in South Africa. My paper cannot fail to raise my salary, and I have no doubt I shall be asked to take on others."

The "Image" became positively inflated and looked at me in a pitying sort of way when I leant back in my chair and positively roared. When I recovered a little I gasped out in a jerky way:

"What is the number of your room?"

"No. 63," responded the "Image" looking not a little offended, "and," he added "I really don't see there is anything to laugh at. I think it is a terrible thing, the man on whom all England is depending, to be shot by those dastardly Boers. It is too awful."

"Quite so," I replied becoming grave, "if it were true, but my dear fellow, my room happens to be No. 64, and there is a folding door between it and the next room and the conversation you have just told was the facsimile of one between myself and our mutual friend Jim Baldwin."

"Don't tell me that he is a murderer," gasped the "Image."

"No," I replied, "not yet, but we are both ardent camera fiends, and we had the luck to be on board the yacht when the liner passed bearing Sir Redvers Buller and others to Capetown.

"We didn't shoot him as you have cabled to your paper, but we had the luck to get several snap-shots of him as the vessel went by. The remarks you overheard which sounded so blood-thirsty, were nothing more nor less than our natural exuberance at having got some good photos of the man whom as you say all England is looking to, to beat the Boers."

"But they said they would reduce him," the "Image" feebly expostulated.

"A photographic term, my dear fellow," I answered, "one reduces a picture when the plate is too thick."

Just then Jim Baldwin came in, a paper in hand.

"Talk of reducing," said he, "whoever wired this silly nonsense home will be reduced pretty quick I should think."

The "Image" sank into his chair with a groan.

"I'm done for," he said, "no one will believe a word I send after this."

"The wonder is," continued Jim Baldwin, not noticing Green's remark, "that the British public can remain such asses as to believe all they hear."

The "Image" squirmed and was completely finished by the waiter bringing in a wire from his office. Green threw it towards us.

"We want news not false reports," was the concise and somewhat curt wording of the message.

"Listeners," says an old adage, "seldom hear good of themselves," but in this instance the listener heard nought that was good for his paper.

The last I heard of our friend was that he had resigned his post as special correspondent and had volunteered for the front, hoping he would get shot, not by a camera, but by a Boer.

MAUDE CRAIGIE HALKETT.

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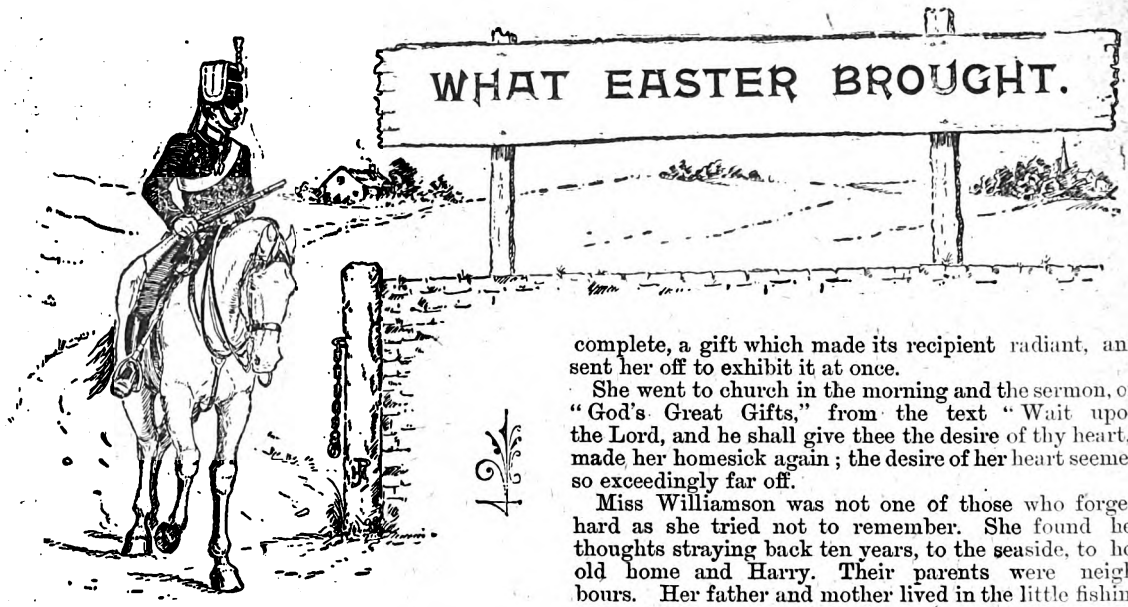

MISS WILLIAMSON opened her eyes to the sunshine with a startled feeling of having overslept herself; then closed them again at the sound of the chimes from the church round the corner.

For it was Good Friday, the one day, except Sundays, in the year which she could really and truly call her own.

She was that overworked individual, a popular dressmaker, going out by the day, and she sometimes wished that people would send for somebody else sometimes and let her rest.

Last Whitsun she had been in the country, sewing for dear life, in order to finish a belated bridal trousseau, and on August Bank Holiday she had worked until dark to accommodate a customer who wished to outshine her sister-in-law at a garden-party at the house of her husband's father, but on Good Friday not even the most exacting customer could ask her services.

And yet—was she glad it was Eastertide? The associations which cluster round the season make it a sorrowful one to those who have nothing left excepting memories of home and, saving for one brother, Miss Williamson was alone in the world.

Really, Miss Williamson told herself, she had no business to be low-spirited, she was a very fortunate person; think how many people were starving for the lack of work, and all that, she concluded vaguely as she finished her breakfast. The tea, which she made in her room, heating the water on a small gas stove, was excellent, she was particular about tea, and she felt better after drinking it.

Altogether she was in quite a cheerful mood, when the little daughter of her landlady came to see if she were getting up, and to bring an invitation from her mother to eat her dinner to-day with them. Dinner would be at half-past two. Miss Williamson thanked them very much and would dine with them with pleasure. Then she gave the little girl a small present she had for her, a stylish young lady-doll dressed in the latest fashion, with coat and hat complete, a gift which made its recipient radiant, and sent her off to exhibit it at once.

She went to church in the morning and the sermon, on "God's Great Gifts," from the text "Wait upon the Lord, and he shall give thee the desire of thy heart," made her homesick again; the desire of her heart seemed so exceedingly far off.

Miss Williamson was not one of those who forget, hard as she tried not to remember. She found her thoughts straying back ten years, to the seaside, to her old home and Harry. Their parents were neighbours. Her father and mother lived in the little fishing town and let apartments in the season; his father was the farmer who supplied them with vegetables and fruit. Harry drove the wagon which brought the daily supply to the cottages; they would have known each other in any case, but the morning interviews over lettuce and strawberries, plums and tomatoes, brought them closer together.

Every one approved of their engagement, and the day was fixed, when a great misfortune happened; her mother and oldest sister were drowned in a boating accident through want of care in the handling of the boat. This was bad enough, surely, but "troubles hunt in couples," and the blow seemed to affect her father's mind, he became almost childish; took to his bed and would have no one but her to wait upon him. To complete the roll of disaster, her brother suddenly brought home, as his wife, a girl whom none of his friends would have chosen, and the old man would not let his daughter-in-law come near him. To tell the truth, she had no desire to help Miss Williamson in her duties; she had married for a step up, and said plainly that she did not mean to slave, to please anybody.

"You see how it is, Harry," she said, with streaming eyes, "I cannot leave father, even for you."

"Bring him to our house with you," replied Harry; "there is plenty of room, and father and mother won't mind."

"No, Harry, thanks ever so much, but that wouldn't do any good. Father wouldn't be satisfied; besides he takes up so much of my time that I couldn't do my duty by you." And Harry had to submit with the best grace he could muster.

Unfortunately, he consulted the doctor who attended Mr. Williamson as to the probable duration of the old man's illness.

The doctor assured him that the trouble was chiefly hypochondria, and that he might live for years in the same state, or might possibly recover as suddenly as he had collapsed; at all events, the patient was in no immediate danger.

The inquiry would have done no harm had it not been that the doctor had a talking wife, to whom he

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told everything; so before long the whole neighbourhood was saying that Harry Burkin had been asking how long old Mr. Williamson could live. Of course, the story came to Miss Williamson's ears, to her intense indignation and still greater grief. Harry could not deny it *in toto*, and short of positive denial she would listen to no explanation.

There was a quarrel, a broken engagement, and Harry Burkin left the town, leaving his sweetheart well nigh broken-hearted, with only duty to console her; and sometimes duty is the best consolation one can have.

If he had been less impatient there would have been no trouble. Dr. Turner did not understand the effect which a broken heart sometimes produces upon the body. Mr. Williamson died before the winter was over. Harry Burkin came home as soon as he heard the news, but Miss Williamson had gone to the city with a cousin of her mother, and was obdurate; her filial affection found satisfaction in refusing to forgive her lover who had desired her father's death. She would not even see him, and so the affair ended.

* * * * *

Well, it was too late now, and she was silly to be dreaming of it. The sermon was ended and the solemn music of the organ roused her to the consciousness of things present and to come; she took part with the congregation in the rest of the service, and then hurried home to make a hasty toilet for dinner.

There was only a quiet family gathering. The *fiancé* of the oldest daughter, a travelling salesman in the employ of the wholesale house, was the life of the party. He was considered a very bright young man and a good talker. He was at his best to-day, and kept them all amused with stories of his travels, so that Miss Williamson had only to listen with a semblance of interest.

"By the way, Miss Williamson," he said presently, "I met an old friend of yours on this last round: Burkin was the name, H. W. Burkin. It was in Swansea. He was doing well in business there, and is quite chummy with one of my best customers who has some money in his business. The two were together at my rooms in the hotel, and he saw Min's picture on the dressing-table; I always carry it round to keep me out of temptation—guardian angel business, you know, Min—and he saw it. You know people say you two look alike, and the likeness comes out strong in that photo. It struck him all of a heap.

"'Excuse me,' he said, 'but will you tell me whose picture that is? It looks very much like someone I knew ten years ago.'

"'Certainly,' said I, 'that is my best girl. She is thought very much like a lady who lives in the same house, a Miss Williamson, from somewhere near Deal.'

"Well, it turned out to be the very same. He asked lots of questions about you, especially whether you were married. I gave you a good character and I expect you'll be hearing from him before long. Ross says he is a bachelor."

Miss Williamson controlled herself sufficiently to smile.

"Thank you, we were friends and neighbours when I was a girl," she replied, and in a moment more they were all laughing at a comical anecdote which the commercial was telling in his best style; it was no wonder he sold goods.

* * * * *

When the dinner was over the hostess excused herself soon, upon the plea of domestic duties, leaving Miss Williamson with the young people, so feeling herself not wanted she lingered but a few minutes. Back in her room she gave way and took refuge in that last solace of her sex, a good cry; her overwrought nerves demanded relief and would not be denied.

She was still huddled, a disconsolate heap, on the sofa when there came a tap at the door, which she recognised as that of her little friend. She sat up and hurriedly straightened her hair, trusting that in the dim light of the fast falling twilight the child would notice nothing amiss, sharp as she was.

"Come in," she called, as the knock was repeated.

"Here's a gentleman to see you," the child said, with the air of a person who confers a favour. "He says he is an old friend, so I brought him up."

Miss Williamson remembered that the one maid had been allowed to go to her home for the Easter, and that consequently the little girl would answer the door.

"Thank you," she said, "you may go."

Then she found herself face to face with a bearded man, whose eyes only were familiar.

"Well, Annie," he said, in the voice she knew so well, "here I am once more."

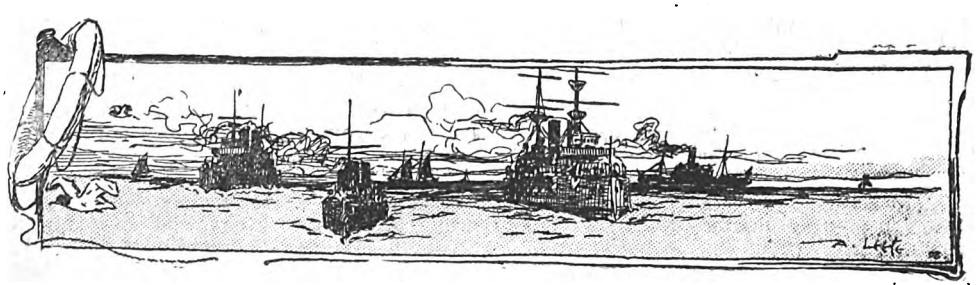
She held out both hands, with an eager gesture. "Oh, Harry, Harry," she cried.

A moment more and she was sobbing on his shoulder, while his arms held her as though they would never let her go.

* * * * *

And now, when Mr. Burkin wishes to tease his wife, he tells his friends that, after making him wait ten years, she helped him at last with the courting.

N. P. Hanby.



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A Non-Consuming Flame.

I SHALL offer no explanation of what I relate. I have no theories by which to explain the phenomenon, if such it be. I had theories but they one after another failed to account for the facts in the case. So I shall simply relate the bare facts as they are, shall vouch for them, produce additional testimony if desired and leave their explanation to some one more acute or at least better versed in the solving of mystery than myself.

To begin with: I am not a believer in ghosts, visitations, sorcery or any relic of barbarism of a kindred nature, and am not a member of the "Society for Psychical Research."

I rented a house in which to spend my vacation. It was simply an ordinary little country cottage. There was nothing about it to attract a second notice; just such a house as one would see in a few hours' ride along any road from Melbourne.

The only thing that attracted me to it was that it was in a rather secluded spot where I could take my little family and spend a quiet summer.

It stood on a small knoll in what is called the "second bottom," about a mile from the river. The ground was dry and well-drained, for only on the rarest occasions did the river floods reach it. I mention these particulars thus minutely as possibly suggesting some of the theories along which I sought an explanation.

The house had been empty for some time when I took it. When I offered to pay for our two months' occupancy in advance the landlord would accept only one month, saying that I could pay the other if I concluded to remain. I laid this queer business method to his generosity and gave it no further thought. While we were arranging our few belongings our nearest neighbour's boy stopped to say:

"Good morning," and made the enquiry. "Bought the house?"

We explained to him that we were there only for a short time and would be pleased to have him call.

"Well," he replied, "perhaps I might come some day, but I ain't much of a hand to be coming round here at night. Think you'll stay two months?"

We assured him that we would.

"Well, perhaps you will," he returned, as he trudged off towards home.

Several of the other neighbours looked mysterious and knowing when they learned that we had rented the "Copic house" for the summer.

"Pretty place, it's true; but, oh, well——" our neighbour boy's father remarked when I met him after we had been safely ensconced for a few days. I saw nothing in this at the time, but subsequent events made all clear to me.

Our sleeping apartments were above; the rooms were airy and all things pointed to a pleasant summer outing. One morning my wife remarked at breakfast about resting badly during the night. I had to confess to the same feeling. We attributed it to our fishing excursion of the day before, and thought no more of it.

One night a week or so later we had retired as usual, but try as I would I could not go to sleep. I tried all of the means with which I was acquainted to bring on drowsiness. I named alphabetically all of my friends; I counted up to a hundred slowly, but still sleep forsook me. I am naturally a heavy sleeper, but tonight this blessing was of no value. I was restless and nervous. In fact every nerve seemed on end and was strung to the highest tension. I felt no pain; a pain would have been a relief; it would have centralised the agony. When I laid my ear to the pillow, the lush, lush of my pulse was torture, and when I kept perfectly still in any position the very couch would vibrate to my heart beats. I felt if I could scream it would be a relief, but that would startle the household. I heard my wife turning restlessly on her couch.

Presently my little child, a boy of three, asked from his cot.

"Papa, tan I dit in bed wif you? I tan't doe to s'eep."

I told him "yes," and he crawled close up to me, all of a tremble.

I heard my wife turning restlessly again, and I asked, "Grace, what could we have eaten for supper? I can't go to sleep." She replied that she hadn't closed her eyes either, but that our supper had been the same as usual.

All was soon quiet and I again tried to woo slumber. I heard the clock in the room strike eleven; an hour of agony passed and I heard it droll out twelve. Its usually mellow sounds grated on my sensitive ears and the last stroke sounded through the room like a shout in a cave. One o'clock passed and only the child had

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found sleep, but it seemed more the fitful sleep of one in a fever than the healthy slumber of a child. The clock had just struck two, when I heard voices in the yard below. Recognising my neighbour's voice, I went down and found him, and his two sons and one of his labourers. "We just saw that your house was on fire and came over to give you any help we could," one of the boys remarked.

"House on fire!" I exclaimed; "you've made a mistake."

"Yes, 'twas," he persisted; "all ablaze on the roof."

"You must be mistaken," I replied; "I see no signs of it now."

"No," the old gentleman interposed; "it went out just as we got here; it always does."

"What do you mean? Do you suppose I'm daft to believe such stuff! Don't you see it's all dark up there?" I replied somewhat warmly, for I thought they were simply passing by and wanted a little fun at my expense. So I went into the house and closed the door on them.

"All right," the boy returned, "you'll see."

I made some excuse to my wife for their call, tumbled into bed, and it was broad daylight when I awoke. We said little about the restlessness of the night, but I thought much. We experienced no more difficulty in sleeping and I had about forgotten the occurrence.

I was called to the village one evening a week or so later and was detained late into the night. I was cantering homeward shortly after midnight. When I was some two miles from home, with a heavy tract of timber between me and my house, suddenly the sky above and beyond the woods was illumined as from a great fire.

My horse stopped with a suddenness that all but sent me over his head. It was with difficulty that I urged him forward. I looked again. The fire was in the direction of my house. I whipped my horse into a run. When I plunged into the timber the sky beyond was red. In my dread lest it was my house I lashed my horse along regardless of bad road and low-hanging limbs.

When I emerged from the timber within a quarter of a mile of home all was dark. I rode more leisurely, but yet nervously, the little distance that remained. When I went up to my room I found my wife and little one suffering from the same nervous sleeplessness that we had experienced on the night mentioned before. I did not speak to her of what I had seen and, being tired from my ride, we were soon asleep. I said nothing to any of my neighbours for fear they might thing I had imbibed a little while at the village.

The second day following I met my neighbour and he asked:

"How did you sleep night before last?"

I looked at him and said:

"Look here, I want to talk to you."

I told him of my feelings on the night of his call and of my wild night's ride, also of my wife and child's restlessness on the same night.

Then the story that he told me, if I had been superstitious, would have made me fear to approach the house in broad day.

"The queer thing," he continued, "is that those in the house can't see it, but just feel as you have described. You fetch your traps over and stay with me for a week and you'll get to see it."

On some pretext to satisfy my wife we went to board at our neighbour's. We had been there about a week and I was occupying a room facing the house on the knoll, which was about a quarter of a mile distant.

One night, I was awakened by a knock on my door.

"Come, hurry up, and you'll get to see it," some one said.

I opened my eyes.

My room was all aglow! The light streamed in at the windows! I sprang to the window and beheld the roof of the house in a sheet of flame.

Hurrying into my clothes, I ran out and found the family all up, and watching it.

"Come on!" I said; "let's go!"

"No use," the old man said, but I had started and the boys followed.

I ran, never taking my eyes off the house. It was a peculiar flame, resembling more the burning of phosphorus than the fire from dry timber.

When half-way there, I saw the roof fall in. A shower of sparks shot up into the air and was carried away by the light breeze. As I neared the house the flames grew brighter!

They were now bursting from the window of my sleeping-room, that was! The fire was fierce, but strange to relate the roar made by a fire of such size was absent! It was doing its dastardly work in awful silence.

As I stopped to get my breath, and look about all objects shone as bright almost as day! I looked again! Was I sane or had my reason forsaken me! All was dark! I rubbed my eyes! There stood the house a silhouette against the sky! Its outline was perfect. "Boy's, let's go back," I said. "All right, sir! We're with you," and they showed their willingness by leading the way.

When we reached home I told what I had seen. All of the family, the old gentleman and wife, his two sons, the farm labourer and my wife had witnessed the same as I had. It could have been no hallucination on my part.

Against my wishes my wife had our things moved immediately from the house. We took up our abode with our neighbour and I spent the remainder of the summer outing in a study of that house.

I slept in it again and again, and, though I experienced the same uncanny restlessness, yet when I rushed into the yard to catch a glimpse of the flames I invariably saw nothing. My wild runs to the house, even though made on a fleet horse, always ended in darkness.

I followed every theory that offered even the slightest possible chance of a solution, but all led to the sphinx.

I learned that it was only during the summer months that the queer freak of nature, for such I believe it to be, was to be seen.

At the end of my vacation I gave up, the problem as much a mystery as when I had first witnessed it.

On our leaving the country to return to duty in Melbourne I made arrangements to be informed of any new departure in the freak, but the information received has added nothing to what I have already related.

I have simply stated plain, unvarnished facts at the possible expense of having my sanity questioned. I offer no explanation, for I have none.

I am ready to bow to the man who can offer a satisfactory one.

F. Watson.

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THE PAPER FOR THE TEA TABLE.

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The Brain Gymnasium.

In these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, Short Stories, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by Monday, April 23rd, 1900.

No. 88.

Form a square word with words signifying:

"To let fall"; "A species of deer"; "At one time"; "To skin."

No. 89.

To the letters A A A L M, add those contained in the names of two vessels, the one formed by changing the head of the other, so that a gigantic undertaking can be read.

No. 90.

Re-arrange the following letters so that two word-squares are formed, the connecting word of which is a dog:

A A A A A Á C D E E E E F F F I I
L L L L L L M M R S S S T

No. 91.

My first is in dough, but not in row:
My second in funny you will find;
My third is in need, but not in plead;
My fourth, you see, is always in climbed:
My fifth a portion is of yearning;
My whole is very slow at learning.

No. 92.

A	C	X	B	Y	Z
B	F	E	D	C	A

* * * * * *

For the above cryptogram, the alphabet has been numbered according to a certain rule. If in place of the above letters their cryptogram number be inserted, it will be found that in each case the second row is exactly twice the value of the first. Add the two lines together, and put the corresponding ordinary alphabet letter represented by the figure. A word signifying "a prank" will then be found.

No. 93.

Let economical polity prate of it
As an advantage—my terrible FIRST;
We of this latter day—having a hate of it,
Long for the end of it—custom accurst.

Science will FIRST destroy, surely, in time to come,
Bring to dead SECOND all who engage
In FIRST; and SECOND in durance the wight, who'd drum
Fools to this folly, so sad to the sage.

Yes, science the WHOLE is, who from the FIRST should free us soon,
And seeming cruel, would end being kind;
Such a WHOLE, though in past ages not thought a boon,
Would now prove a blessing to weary mankind.

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Nos. 64 to 69.

The prize of £2 has been awarded to Mr. Charles Harwood, of 15 Colfe Road, Forest Hill, S.E., whose solution was the first correct one dealt with.

A copy of "The Virgin of the Sun," by George Griffiths, has been sent to each of the following:

Miss E. Short, 18 Brynhenlog Terrace, Ebbw Vale, Mon.
J. H. Cockerill, 17 Essex Street, Kingsland Road, London, N.
O. Frankenstein, 1 St. James's Terrace, Regent's Park, N.W.
W. J. Green, 161 Brook Street, Kennington, S.E.
M. W. Daws, 21 Parliament Street, Hull.
E. Hutchings, 4 Kingsgate Street, High Holborn, W.C.
H. B. Thompson, Bracknell, Berks.
I. M. Child, 46 Wilson Street, Derby.
W. C. Lee, 160 Shaw Heath, Stockport.
D. G. Jetley, 3 Cantwell Road, Plumstead.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES.

Nos. 70 to 75.

No. 70. **Sir Walter Scott—Marmion.**

No. 71. **Camp-bell; Words-worth; Dry-den; Long-fellow; Butler.**

No. 72. **It is on or it is in it.**

No. 73. **"It is an ill wind that blows nobody good."**

No. 74. **Severn. Shilling, enemy, vase, elephant, rabbit, navvy.**

No. 75. **"He that complies against his will Is of his own opinion still."**

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Printed and Published by C. Arthur Pearson Ltd. at Pearson's Weekly Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

THEY MUST AGREE.

As to matters that have no practical outcome it is of no consequence whether we agree or not. The earth may be, as some say it is, a molten mass (save for a shell a few miles thick on the outside), or it may be solid and cool all the way through from London to Sydney. However it may be, we can *do* nothing about it. So let the scientific chaps go on speculating to their hearts' content; the world will keep revolving as usual, and we shall have to continue picking up our living from its surface.

Recently in my reading I have come upon articles in certain medical journals—uncanny, uninteresting publications that they are, for non-professional perusal—going to show that it is *not the heart* which impels the blood through the body, but the chemical action of oxygen inhaled by the lungs. A prodigious discovery, if it is a discovery at all.

Yet what odds would it make? None whatever. Fair women would blush by the help of the capillaries as of old, and we should tie rags around cut fingers just the same. It follows, my brethren, that some things may be mysteries to the end of the chapter, and no harm done, and others may differ without disturbing the serenity of our passing days—a most soothing reflection.

But the advantage or otherwise of a person's food agreeing or disagreeing with him is *not* a mere matter of opinion. There is only one way to look at that. As a whole, food *must* agree with us, and we with it, or we are ruined. A lady of Sheffield, Mrs. S. A. Smith, suffered a long, wearisome, and costly illness, simply because her food failed to agree with her. For three years she was weak and wretched on account of it. The light and pleasure went out of her life. She needed to eat, of course, just as she needed to breathe; yet, after every meal—commonly of light things taken in small quantities, and slowly—she was immediately seized with pains in the stomach, the chest, and the left side. Was not this a hard recompense for doing what nature compelled her to do—to eat?

Any act which causes pain is performed as seldom as possible, and as incompletely. For who wants to suffer?

Eating so little—not half as much as her body called for—Mrs. Smith lost flesh and strength. Necessarily. Draw more money out of the bank than you deposit, and presently the bank returns your cheques marked "No funds." To be sure. Nobody can make twice two equal five.

"I got to be so feeble I could scarcely get about," says the lady. "I was like this for three years from the spring of 1893—being worse in the spring than at other seasons. What to do more than I had done, I didn't know, when one day, my aunt, Mrs. William Andrew, of Willoughton, urged me to take Mother Seigel's Syrup. After having done so for a short time, the complaint—indigestion—was better, and soon it wholly disappeared. I am now entirely cured, and strong and hearty as I was before my illness came upon me. You may rest assured that after so fortunate an experience with Mother Seigel's Syrup I recommended it to all my friends, and in sending you this short statement it is my wish that you should print it for the good of others if you so desire."—S. A. Smith, 44 Ditchingham Road, Sheffield, June 3rd, 1898.

"In April of this year (1898)," says another, "my health began to fail. I felt drowsy, and tired with the least exertion. After every meal I had oppression at the chest and sides, and a great deal of pain. Whatever food I took *disagreed with me*, and I grew weak. I am a dressmaker, and when at my work I had so great pain I could hardly bear it. I tried all the usual medicines for indigestion, but got worse and worse. One day in July I read about Mother Seigel's Syrup, and got a bottle of Mr. Hattersley, chemist, West India Dock Road, and in a few days felt better. After taking a second bottle I was cured, and have been well ever since.—(Miss) Minnie Wyatt, 46 West India Dock Road, London, E., October 14th, 1898.

Yes, it is true, health and life depend on a perfect agreement between ourselves and our food. This is not a matter of opinion. It is a vital and living relationship, and nothing does so much to promote the agreement as the frequent and timely use of Mother Seigel's Syrup.

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THE BATTLE OF MANCHESTER. *See "The Invaders," in PEARSON'S WEEKLY.*

SHORT STORIES

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN

No. 590. FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 21ST, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

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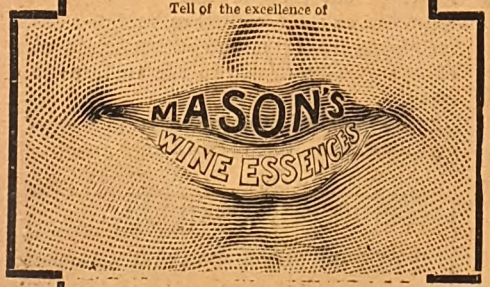

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FRANCIS RAVENSCROFT, *Manager.*

SHORT STORIES

No. 590.] [1d.

For the Week Ending April 21st 1900.

The Eldest Miss Curzon.

"WELL, mother, I think you will allow that my chance has come at last, and if I cannot profit by it, then it will not be my fault," said the eldest Miss Curzon as she glanced at her reflection in the mirror over the mantelpiece with a pleased little smile.

"My dear, I hope—I do hope you will," replied a thin, tired looking woman who had been reading a letter.

She, too, looked at the reflection of her handsome daughter in the glass and fervently hoped that she might find favour in the eyes of the Rector's nephew—for Marion was twenty-seven and unattached.

"Pah!" cried Harold, who was eighteen and did not believe his sisters either pretty, clever or fascinating, after the manner of brothers. "Pah! who'd be fool enough to marry you? Not Sir Kenneth Brakspeare I'm thinking."

Marion cast a withering glance in the direction of the speaker, and then continued talking to her mother.

"I haven't had a chance after all said and done. I've waited in this hole of a place for someone to come—and someone has come at last—so we shall see!"

"There is a brother staying with him also, isn't there?" asked the flaxen-haired Grace, who seldom said much.

"Yes, they're both there. The letter says Sir Kenneth has come to see his uncle—he is the only relative living,

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and Richard has come with him to say good-bye as his regiment is ordered to India, and she hopes the girls will come over often, because she is afraid the young men will find it dull," said Mrs. Curzon, quoting from the letter.

"But there is Janie and Vi," put in Grace, "their own cousins."

"Really, Grace! I am surprised that I should own a sister who can be so persistently stupid. As if any men living, let alone men in the Service, could bear to speak to Janie or Vi for more than two minutes—the idea is laughable."

Grace shrank back abashed. She felt her inferiority beside her majestic sister keenly.

"Well, he has a brother, Marion, so perhaps if Sir Kenneth," she hazarded timidly, but she was cut short with:

"You may have the brother—Sir Kenneth or nothing is my mark. Our family wants raising and it is I who am chosen to do it, I can see that!" and she did not look unlike the pictures of Britannia with her red gold hair and steel blue eyes—a trifle hard the eyes perhaps, but still pretty enough at times.

"Well, from what one might gather from your conversation, you intend to lay siege to this Johnny and marry him whether he likes it or not," said Harold.

"That is fairly true—except that he will like it," replied his sister with a conscious shake of her pretty head. "There is one thing—you won't want any new dresses, will you, Marion. The ones you had to go to the Masseys will do," said Grace.

"I shall want several new dresses, on the contrary, and nobody ought to know that better than you! Titled and rich men don't come so often this way but that they are worth a little trouble when they do come."

Mrs. Curzon sighed plaintively and glanced at several unpaid bills on the side table. Not that she would call her eldest daughter extravagant—oh, no, but still sometimes it was a little hard to keep pace with the demands made upon the domestic exchequer by Marion.

"Don't sigh like that, mother," cried Marion sharply. "I can't help those bills. Every other girl has money to dress on but me, and you knew as well as I——"

"Oh, yes, my dear," with a deprecating wave of the hands. "I know you must—we will go into Exeter this morning and choose a few things." And Marion left the room with a look of stern resolution to win or die, as Harold said, adding, as the door closed:

"Cheer up, Grace. When she's married you and I will have larks all by ourselves; it will be jolly!"

But Grace was wondering whether one of Marion's "Massey" gowns would fit her, and if not, what was she to appear in at the Rectory so that she might not proclaim the family poverty and disgrace her sister.

* * * * *

"Let me introduce my two nephews, Sir Kenneth and Captain Brakspeare, Miss Curzon, Miss Grace Curzon. I want you all to be great friends, and you"—turning to Marion—"will do what you can to make it lively for them, we are so quiet here, you know," said the plump little lady of the Rectory as the girls advanced across the lawn some days later.

Two long, lithe bodies disengaged themselves from two lounging chairs and stood up in the likeness of two men.

They bowed to the girls, and the first rivet was forged, as Harold would have said.

Marion looked bewitchingly pretty in a dainty cream muslin trimmed with blue and a large hat to match. It had come that morning from the dressmaker, and she wore it without a backward glance at the increasing pile of bills on the side table.

"Mother, he has £8,000 a year so I hear; it will be all right," she had said.

Grace was in pale green—also a charming costume—one of Marion's that had been shortened somewhat in the skirt to exactly fit its present occupier.

"Who'd be fool enough to marry you?" cried Harold.

Sir Kenneth looked admiringly from one girl to the other.

There certainly was an unutterable distance between them and the two dull, pasty-faced women who claimed him as cousin.

Marion took the initiative at once and took possession of Sir Kenneth with a promptitude that caused the rector's wife to smile a little. She exerted herself to her utmost, and her bright glances and witty sallies called forth more than one glance of admiration from the sleepy brown eyes of her listener.

Grace fell to the lot of the gallant Captain, who being young had not yet got over the stage of using the personal pronoun a good deal in his conversation. But he was a good looking youth, and Grace, seeing Marion making such

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good headway was content to drift into a desultory conversation with Richard.

"First impressions are always good," said Marion, as she unbound her hair that night, "and I think we did very well. I found him a delightful companion, with such nice ideas about things—only once or twice he said something about women which I did not like much—I wonder if his aunt has told him about the others——?"

"What, Stanley and George and those?" queried Grace.

Marion nodded.

"N'no, I should not think so, you see they are all gone away from here now, and she seemed quite pleased that you should talk to Sir Kenneth."

Marion looked wise.

"Ah! but women are so funny. I don't think she ever quite forgave me about that curate you know."

"Well, it was hard. You see he was very useful to her, and of course when you refused him he went away."

"The idea! I considered it impertinence on his part to imagine that I would be a curate's wife. I told him so at the time."

Grace was silent. She was trying to recall whether Captain Dick had made any such remark to her.

"And I gathered," interrupted Marion, unconsciously imitating Harold, "that he has been deceived by some woman, and that might account for the way he spoke, because he said only one kind of woman had a charm for him—the pure, innocent, gentlewoman type."

"Well, you ought to do, Marion," said her sister.

"Yes, I ought—but, of course, there are those others!" And Marion knit her smooth brow.

* * * *

"My dear Herbert, there goes that girl again. Really, you know, I don't think it proper!" said the doctor's wife, as she peered through a hole in the curtain and saw Sir Kenneth and the eldest Miss Curzon ride by on horseback.

"Why trouble? We are waiting hourly for the news of their engagement. It has been going on now for several weeks, and one can see that she, at any rate, is doing all she knows," replied the doctor.

"I wish you wouldn't be so slangy, Herbert. But, really, I should like to know what Miss Miggins and the Davis's think of it. She goes out riding every morning, and is always up at the rectory, or else he is at her place. They went over (he drove her in a tandem, I heard, but I did not see her) to Exeter to the tournament there, and once or twice to the theatre, really!" And the little lady rubbed her spectacles.

"Her sister went with her, and his brother, so it was quite proper," put in her husband.

"Ah!" cried Mrs. Cook, turning round sharply, "but they rode bicyles; they were not in the same trap as the others. I shall step out as soon as I have ordered the things, and just see what Mrs. Davis does think!"

In the meantime Marion was making the running as hot as she could. There were even bets made between Harold and his bosom friends at the mill as to the possible outcome of affairs, and Grace looked on, figuratively speaking, with her mouth open.

"Let me introduce my two nephews, Sir Kenneth and Captain Brakspeare."

The only one who did not seem to take much active interest in affairs was Sir Kenneth himself. Perhaps being young, titled, and well off he was used to being run after, but he certainly did not seem discomposed in any way by the manner or behaviour of the eldest Miss Curzon.

He was always glad to see her, always ready to take her out riding, driving, boating or any other form of amusement, and that he admired her majestic type of beauty was plainly evident to everybody.

Daily Marion made herself charming and ready for conquest, nightly she cried herself to sleep with chagrin and annoyance.

"I shall have to propose myself!" she said through her set teeth one day. "What can be keeping him back? That horrid Vi laughed at me to-day and asked me if I wouldn't feel dull when Kenneth was gone! I could have killed her!"

"Oh, Marion!" cried Grace quite shocked.

"Yes, and the other night he went to Exeter to dine with friends, and I was out riding on my bicycle—I had been over to Sutton Court, and passed his trap on the way home—and it was raining hard and I was wet through, and Mrs. Cook—that horrid little woman told me yesterday that if I was not more careful about standing in the wet for over an hour I should be ill. Fancy, what impertinence! But wait," she added fiercely. "Wait till the time comes—I will show them then!"

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Grace was afraid to answer. Her gentle heart was rather shocked, and her sense of propriety also when she thought of her proud irresistible sister standing for an hour in the rain on the chance of meeting any man!

"It is young Bertie Sutton's coming of age next week and they are going to have the grounds illuminated and have a band and we are all going—of course it means another gown for me, but he shall propose that night if I have to force him," she muttered as she got into bed.

* * * * *

"Here you are, I thought you were never coming. I have been waiting such an age," said Sir Kenneth as he stood within the ring of light where Mr. Sutton was receiving her guests on the lawn, and Marion, clad in some clinging draperies, swept majestically into view, quite half-an-hour late.

She cast a glance at him.

"Have you found it very dull waiting?" she said softly.

He bent his tall figure to reply, at the same time giving her hand the faintest pressure.

"Awfully!"

Marion felt her heart bound with joy. The moment, she felt sure was approaching.

"Where is your sister?" he asked eagerly. "Has she come?"

"Oh, yes — she's with mamma somewhere. By-the-by, you seem to be very interested in Grace," a trifle jealously.

"I have reason to. I hope she is to be my sister-in-law," he replied slowly.

The fairy lights danced wildly round, and there was a surging as of water in Marion's ears. Was he proposing?

He seemed to pause as if expecting an answer of some kind, so she forced her dry lips to say:

"Is she?"

"Yes. Dick is going to ask her to marry him this evening. Poor old chap, he's awfully bitten. I wish him every luck; she is a sweet girl," was the answer.

The world settled down and the fairy lights took their proper places once more in Marion's eyesight.

She gave Sir Kenneth a dangerous look from under her long eyelashes.

"I expect he will. Who could resist either of you?" she said.

He gave her hand another squeeze.

"It's awfully nice of you to say that, Dick and I are very much to each other, and I like to think my friends care for him too," he said.

But it was not of Dick or his affairs she was thinking.

Conversation became broken and intermittent, and Sir Kenneth appeared preoccupied, while Marion with a discretion born of experience did not break upon his meditations. She guessed what was working in his mind, and she left the soft seductive night, the sound of the band and the mystic colourings of the many lanterns to do the rest.

She felt almost sure of her fish now.

They were sitting on a mossy seat under a little arbour of trailing hops, and Marion was idly watching the glow from the tip of her companion's cigar.

"You are very silent," she said at last.

"Am I—I'm afraid I am awfully rude, but I can't get Dick out of my mind. I hope he will be happy!" he said very earnestly.

"Why shouldn't he—people usually are," she said.

"Well you see I—years ago, made an awful mess of things, and I have always been afraid for him."

"Ah!" she drew in her breath quickly. She dearly longed to hear what that little mystery was. Aloud she said:

"Grace will make him happy."

He turned and took her hand, looking into her blue eyes, just now very soft and gentle.

"Thank you, Marion," he said, unconsciously calling her by her christian name. The hot colour swept into the girl's cheek and she was glad the lanterns' light was too vague for him to notice it.

"Sh!" he whispered suddenly. "Here they come!"

And a moment after his brother and Grace, side by side, passed down the glade engaged in low and evidently very interesting conversation.

Sir Kenneth gave a deep sigh.

"He has won," he said. "Let us go and listen to the band a bit. Don't you find it rather chilly here?"

Miss Curzon said no, she felt perfectly warm; but seeing he was evidently anxious to quit the sentimental gloom of the arbour, she concealed her chagrin and followed him to where the lights were banked up in hundreds and the band was playing.

"Have you seen a programme?" she said to her companion.

"No, I did not know they had any."

"Oh, yes, there is one. There is a tenor engaged to sing, and some girl from a theatre in London also is a wonderful dancer; Bertie saw her last year, and has had her down at great expense to dance to us. I expect it will be rather interesting."

"I don't. Those performances are generally overrated, I think," he said in a cold, indifferent voice; and Marion felt instinctively that she had said the wrong thing.

Marion felt her arm grasped in a tight grasp.

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Just then the band struck up a dashing air, and out on the platform sprang a small woman with black eyes, and a yellow skirt reaching, perhaps, to her knees. She sang in a coarse strident voice about how "Her Johnnie didn't know her now," and then executed a series of evolutions with her skirts, giving her audience an ample view of the lace and muslin beneath.

Marion felt her arm grasped in a tight grasp, and heard a hoarse voice say:

"Come away, for Heaven's sake! Don't look at it!"

She went, wondering slightly. Everybody else seemed either delighted or shocked by Nina Forsythe's efforts at amusement, and Bertie Sutton himself handed her a magnificent bouquet of roses at the conclusion of her "turn."

Miss Curzon glanced at her companion. His face was very white.

"Don't you feel well?" she said, laying her hand on his arm.

He shook himself.

"I'm all right," he said in rather and odd voice. "But that gave me rather a shock."

"Did it?"

"Yes—one doesn't expect to find those people in a place like this," he said, bitterly.

Marion meanwhile led him unconsciously back to the arbour where the two great lanterns in the shape of crimson fishes were swinging gently in the night air.

Had he been able to see he would have seen Miss Curzon's mouth set in a firm straight line that betokened resolution.

But he never even looked at her.

At first she tried to interest him in conversation, but found it up-hill work. Then she tried the more subtle and dangerous course of little half-uttered speeches and long glances, but Sir Kenneth was very dull and did not take the bait at all.

Suddenly he was awakened from his lethargy by feeling his hand seized in a hot firm grasp and seeing a white face with sparkling eyes close to him.

For a moment he was dazed at the suddenness of the onslaught, and then it dawned upon him that Marion was telling him in passionate language that she loved him and him alone!

To say he was amazed would have been to put it mildly.

Her white desperate face and flaming eyes quite took his breath away.

He tried to rise but she was leaning heavily on his arm.

"Oh Kenneth, if you only knew what I have suffered all this time, don't turn away—don't tell me after all I have done and am doing, don't tell me that you do not love me!" she cried passionately.

He found himself wondering how he had ever even thought her pretty!

"Really," he stammered. "I'm awfully sorry—can't make out how I led you to think my intentions——"

She interrupted him by flinging her white, bare arm round his neck. She felt, with an awful sickening feeling, that she was playing a losing game.

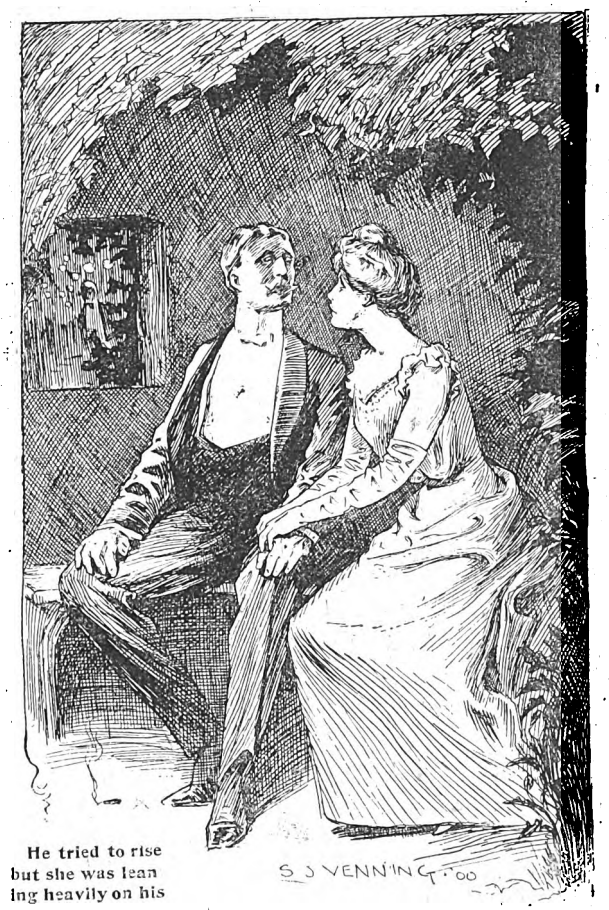
And the two red fishes seemed to nod to each other and gloat over her discomfiture with their staring eyes.

Brakspeare stood up. He felt the present crisis needed dealing with promptly.

"My dear Miss Curzon, you overwhelm me with shame to think my behaviour towards you should have led you to think, for one moment that I had any aspirations to your hand."

She rose also, her face flaming.

"Then have you been playing with me all this time? Amusing yourself at my expense? Causing my name to be handed about all over the county, and so ruining my chance of ever—by Heaven, Sir Kenneth, you shall not! You shall not treat me like this. You must marry me now; you must, and you shall!"



He tried to rise but she was leaning heavily on his arm.

She faced him with the face of a Medusa.

Kenneth saw also that she was becoming hysterical, and the ominous fishes danced wildly together in the breeze. He took her hands.

"Be calm, Miss Curzon," he said, kindly, as he made her sit down again.

"Be calm! If it is so that I, in the genuine pleasure I took in your society, have caused you to be spoken of lightly, believe me, as a gentleman, I would offer you my hand and name instantly. But it is impossible!"

"It is not impossible. Oh, Kenneth, say you will marry me—I love you so—I do! Why can't you marry me?" she cried, taking heart again at his words.

"For the best of all reasons," he replied, between his set teeth. "I am married already. Nina Forsythe is my wife!"

And then the scarlet fishes faded altogether from the vision of the eldest Miss Curzon.

Erroll Stanhope.

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KALI, THE DEATH GODDESS.

THE little hill village of Begra, as everyone is aware, is a small military station midway between Naince Tol, in the Oude and Khatmandoo in the Nepaul.

It was there that I met Cyril Vere, a captain in the Punjaub Infantry and with him, undertook one of the rashest expeditions it has ever been my fortune to enter upon.

Tall, handsome almost to beauty, Cyril Vere was counted a lucky man in Begra, where his good looks, wealth, the possession of a simple iron cross "for valour," and his rich baritone voice, carried the day with the European ladies.

"Tristam," he exclaimed one evening, as he and I sat together in his bungalow, "I have decided to go on a somewhat peculiar expedition. Care to come?"

"Tigers?" I queried tentatively.

"No!" he replied laughing, selecting an havana from a box which lay open beside him, on the table. "I'm sick to death of the brutes. The mess dared me to-night to do what I am about to do, and frankly Tris, I should be obliged for your help in this business."

"And what is it?"

"Didn't you hear what Chrichton said?—Oh, of course you were not at mess to-night. With the Stavens for tea, weren't you, this afternoon? Lucky dog, no wonder you miss our feed. Wish I had the chance," he cried gaily. "Well, the fact of the matter is, that I am going to Thum. Mungr, my badahur, is going to act as guide——"

"Thum?" I echoed. "What the deuce do you want to climb higher up these fiendish Himalayas for?"

"Well, you see," he replied merrily, "I've staked five hundred pounds, that I would pay a visit to the goddess Kali."

"Are you crazy, Cy?" I cried, starting from my chair. "Are you aware what your fate will be, if those cursed fanatics catch you in their fane?"

"Kill me as a peace offering to their deity," he replied, cutting the end off his cigar, then he added thoughtfully, "But you see they won't get hold of me."

I paced the room nervously. Knowing Indian affairs better than Cyril did, I was able to appreciate the risk he was about to incur to a nicety.

"I suppose you'll come, old man," he remarked tentatively, looking up, "or is the adventure too spicy a one to tempt you?"

"Oh, I'm not afraid, if that is what you mean," I replied shortly, "but mind, Cyril, you are an ass to attempt it?"

"Thanks awfully! Are you ready?" he queried, rising.

"Ready," I echoed, "for what?"

"To see the Divinity."

"To-night," I gasped, "are you going to-night?"

"Your perception is excellent," he replied gaily. "Thum is only two thousand feet above the plains, and from here it's only a couple of hours' walk. It's nine now, so we ought to get there by midnight. I expect Mungr every moment."

The words had barely left his lips, before the being in question entered, and with a low salaam enquired:

"Are the sahibs ready?"

"Perfectly," replied Cyril, as going to an escritoire he took a revolver from a drawer and examined its charges. "Are you T.K.M.?"

I nodded surlily, the expedition did not appear very seductive to me.

"Is the sahib armed?" enquired the Nepaulese servant, addressing me.

"I am," I replied. "You anticipate the necessity of using weapons?"

"I am the sahib's servant," he replied evasively, "I obey, and know nothing!"

"Have you a rope?" queried Cyril.

"Yes, sahib, one of sixty fathoms, and a torch."

"Good," replied my chum, then turning up his collar, and striding on to the verandah, was lost in the gloom of night.

We followed, I soon imitating his example, in turning up my collar.

If Begra was hot in the day, it was, like most hill stations, chilly in the evenings.

For two hours we walked on in silence, till Mungr stopped in front of a large stone temple, almost concealed from view by weeds, and low growing bushes, and placing his finger to his lips, conjured us not to utter a sound.

"Be as silent as though death had set his seal upon your lips, sahibs," he whispered impressively. "For ere many minutes have elapsed, you will be in the presence of Kali, the destroyer of m'n!"

He shuddered, bowing low, almost to the ground, as though to propitiate the deity he feared, then cautiously pushing his way with furtive tread, through the

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over-hanging shrubs, he reached the portal of the fane.

He paused for a second ere attempting to push open the rolling teak wood door, then he flung it from him, the rusty hinges screeching weirdly as the massive portal swung inwards.

We remained stationary in fear, straining our ears to catch any sound which would prove that the hinges had given the alarm of our proximity to the villagers of Thum.

Silence, broken only by the strident cry of a distant night bird, reassuring us on that score, we entered.

Mungr whispered prayers to Buddah between his chattering teeth, as he lighted his torch. Cyril remained grimly silent, whilst I, despite all my endeavours to the contrary, shivered like an aspen.

A mouldy odour as of an opened tomb greeted my nostrils as I walked along the gloomy fane, hordes of rats startled by our advent scurried across the flagged floor to their holes, then a silence awful in its intensity, reigned supreme.

By dint of alternate blowing and coaxing, Mungr induced his torch to blaze merrily, my courage returning somewhat when the Nepaulese's brand illumined our surroundings with its lurid glow, dispelling the shadows and displaying the whitewashed walls of a temple, carved out of a mountainous side for the most part.

"Come, sahibs," cried the Nepaulese, "follow me, and now may Buddha preserve us!"

We followed him for some distance along the temple, our steps echoing eerily through the myriad arches of the fane, till our guide stopped in front of a gigantic stone, having a ring on its upper surface, and, fixing his spluttering torch in a crack between two flags, cried hoarsely:

"Your help, sahibs. The stone is heavy."

We lent him a hand, and raising the flag, saw a yawning aperture before us, impenetrable darkness veiling its profundity.

"This is the hole you told me about, eh, Mungr? The one leading to the lower temple," exclaimed Cyril, peering down into the depths. "There are no steps, you say?"

"No, sahib, this rope must answer their purpose."

"Go down hand over hand! How jolly! How deep is it?" Cyril queried. "Thirty feet?"

"A hundred and sixty feet, sahib! Do not fear, the rope is sixty fathoms, therefore we have twenty feet to the good! Will you descend first to the house of Kali?" queried the Nepaulese, securing one end of the rope to an adjacent pillar.

"Yes," replied Cyril shortly.

Mungr approached him and tying the rope beneath his arm-pits, announced that he was ready to lower him into the depths beneath.

Cyril let himself over the edge, and catching hold of one of the sides of the aperture, said gaily:

"Say, Tris, old chap, wouldn't it be lively if I dropped into the arms of an expectant priest, eh? Slack away, Mungr."

Yard by yard the sturdy Nepaulese paid out the rope till the strain on his arms relaxed, then hauling up the rope he let me down, carrying the torch.

"I will keep guard, sahib," he whispered as I dropped over the edge. "Be quick and return ere dawns the light of day."

I closed my eyes during the descent, till Cyril's cheery voice announced, at the same time as did the slackening rope, that I was at the end of my journey.

Raising the torch I held high above my head, I was able to note my surroundings.

We were in a natural cavern, the walls of which were hewn out roughly in the shape of pillars. The rocky ceiling was lost to view in impenetrable gloom, as was the furthest end of the cave.

Before us rose a rude rock-hewn altar, from behind which loomed the outline of a gigantic idol, some sixty feet in height.

It was the roughly carved figure of a seated woman, naked to the waist. Its face revolting in its hideousness, was rendered more repulsive by its protruding fangs being dyed a deep blood crimson, the brow and cheeks being liberally smeared with red and yellow ochre, as were its abnormally long arms, which rested on its knees. A string of small bones and dried lizards, depended from its neck, reaching to the breasts of this terrible idol, the nipples of which were represented by sharp steel spikes.

Such was Kali, the Goddess of Death, as seen only by the priests and the victims doomed to be immolated in her honour.

"She is not beautiful," exclaimed Cyril, after surveying the idol for some short while.

"It is a stupendous piece of sculpture," I replied, "but come, let us go back now we've seen it. Any moment we may be discovered, and I am not anxious to have Thum about my ears like a hornet's nest."

"Neither am I, dear boy, only none of the fellows at Begra would believe I'd been in the temple, unless I carried off some trophy," he cried gaily, "therefore I mean to sneak a bone or two off her necklace."

"Don't act the fool, Cyril," I retorted irritably, "there is not a man of 'Ours,' who would doubt your word, and every moment is precious."

"All right," he replied laughingly, "It's only a thirty foot climb, and then we'll trot! I shan't be five minutes."

Before I could answer, he had approached the gigantic idol and commenced to clamber up. It was a comparatively easy task, the creases in the idol's skirt affording facile footholds, therefore ere many moments had passed, he stood flushed and excited on one of the hands, of the Goddess of Death.

"Rather hot work that climb!" he cried mopping his brow with his handkerchief, "but the worst is yet to come, but——"

The sentence for ever remained unfinished, a wild cry of terror which reverberated throughout the temple, replaced the last word, then the loud rumble of machinery awoke the echoes of the fane.

I glanced upwards in fright, to see Cyril in the grip of the idol's hands. Foot by foot he was lifted upwards, struggling frantically to release himself from the figure's retentive grasp.

As a flash of light his fate dawned on me, it must have been the same with him, for a wild piercing shriek of anguish burst from his lips, a shriek which died away in a palsied moan of bitterest agony, as the idol's arms pressed him to its breast, the iron nipple transfixing the wretched man from chest to back.

For a moment it stayed thus, then the mighty arms relaxing, allowed the mangled form they held to fall with a dull thud to the pavement.

Horrorstruck by the grim tragedy which had just been enacted, I approached the mutilated form of Cyril to see if he were quite dead. One look at the starting eyeballs, betraying the intensity of his death agony sufficed, then losing nerve, I let the blazing, resinous

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torch fall on the body, and fled from the corpse towards the rope, I dimly saw in the distance.

A lurid glare lit up the fane causing me to turn even as I had my hand on the rope.

The brand had set the clothes of Cyril on fire.

I was about to return to extinguish it, when the glare enabled me to discern the outlines of some white robed priests enter the cavern.

A wild yell showed that they had perceived me.

"Pull up, for heaven's sake, Mungr," I yelled, emptying the barrels of my revolver amid the oncoming priests.

To my horror the rope remained slack, the running priests were only forty feet away.

Holding my revolver between my teeth, I commenced to climb wildly upwards. Luckily I was a good slack rope climber, and fear made me shin up the rope quicker than I had ever deemed it possible.

I had fourteen feet start when the first priest reached the rope; with a cry of anger he commenced to climb after me.

Merciful Heaven shall I ever forget the agony of that hundred and sixty foot climb, my muscles seemed bursting, yet I stuck gamely to it, and so did the priest.

In the first sixty feet I gained twenty on the priest, at a hundred he had gained twenty-one on me. I remember I felt a savage joy possess me, as for a single moment I noted that the white vestments of a priest in passing the flaming corpse of Cyril, catch fire and blaze merrily. That glance downwards nearly cost me my life, a giddiness seized hold of me, and ere I recovered my self possession the priest had gained four feet on me.

But eight feet now separated me from my pursuer.

Nerved by despair I climbed frenziedly upwards, but thirty feet separated me from the trap when I heard the welcome voice of Mungr.

"Climb sahib! climb! He gains on you!"

Once more I spurted upwards, my arms almost refusing to bear me.

Ten feet more to safety, and I could hear the hard breathing of the pursuing priest beneath me, could feel his hand touch my heel. What thews and muscles of iron he had.

"Now for it sahib!" cried Mungr. "I daren't fire, the report would bring Thum on us."

Blindly I obeyed him, till I felt his strong hand seize my collar.

"Let go," he cried commandingly, raising his sabre above his head.

I obeyed him, and as I relaxed my hold, the weapon came down with a ringing thud on the stone, severing the rope in its passage.

A loud shriek burst from the lips of the priest, as clutching the empty air, he fell with a sickening thud on the pavement beneath.

"I was on guard at the door," Mungr said apologetically, as he lifted me into safety, "and only heard the report of fire arms. Where is Vere sahib?"

"Dead," I replied shortly.

"Dead?" he echoed, "then let us guard the living. Sahib, we must run now for our lives!"

I needed no urging, and together we tore out of the temple through the shrubs and out on to the mountain road, not a moment too soon either, for Thum had received the alarm, and turned out *en masse* to avenge their desecrated temple.

A shout of triumph greeted our appearance, but having some five hundred yards start, we pegged it like path racers.

They had waited for us at the further door of the temple, leaving the one chocked up by bushes, totally unguarded. Had it not been for this omission I should not have been here to-day to tell the tale.

Loading my revolver as I ran, I managed to keep the same distance between the pursuing villagers and ourselves, though the pace was killing as was plainly manifested by Mungr's laboured breathing.

For three quarters of an hour we continued thus, till the roofs of Begra coming into view, in the dim light of dawn, I fired three barrels of my revolver in the air, not daring to lose ground by aiming at the pursuing hordes of infuriated villagers.

The noise of the shooting brought out the little garrison of Begra.

Like madmen Mungr and I tore through the amazed soldiers, I shouting as I ran:

"Fire on that rabble."

In an instant my men fell into line, and received the oncoming villagers with a brisk well directed volley, which, cooling their ardour, sent them howling up the mountain towards Thum, then I fainted away.

The affair nearly provoked a religious revolt, which luckily was suppressed before it came to a head, by the ring-leaders being hanged.

The British government censured me for my part in the affair, and not deeming my life safe in India after the little episode, intimated that I had better exchange into a home-coming regiment,—which I did.

Tristam K. Moncke.

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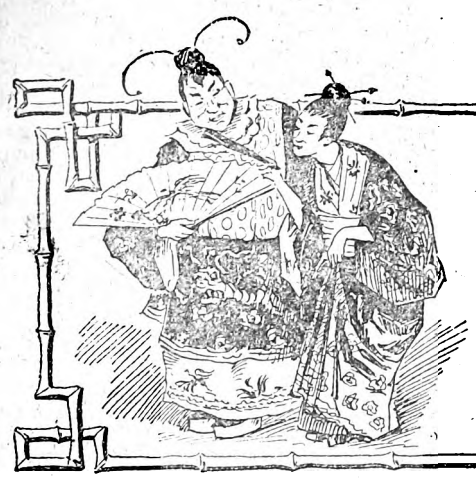


Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

2.—A "PROFESSIONAL" GIVES SOME ADVICE ABOUT MUSCULAR DEVELOPMENT.

THERE was a sort of three-fold, back-action, double-combination look on Mr. Bowser's face as he entered the house the other evening, and for the life of her Mrs. Bowser couldn't make out whether he had fallen heir to a fortune or decided to put up as candidate for the County Council. In this situation she wisely held her peace, and asked no questions even when she discovered that he had brought home a package. He vouchsafed no information, but during the dinner hour was preoccupied and exultant by turns. When they had adjourned to the drawing-room he was ready to explain, and he softly began:

"Mrs. Bowser, with your permission I want to try a little experiment this evening."

"Is it connected with that package you brought home?" she cautiously asked.

"Somewhat. You know how my shoulders have pained me of late? There are mornings when I can scarcely raise my hand to button my collar. I haven't said much to you about it, but——"

"I never heard you complain of your back and shoulders," she interrupted. "Only last night you wanted to move the furniture in our bedroom about, and you said you felt like turning somersaults."

"If I haven't complained," he continued, as he preserved his good nature, "it was because I didn't care to worry you. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Bowser—a matter of medical fact—I am what is called shoulderbound. That is, rheumatism has seized upon and contracted my muscles, and if something is not done paralysis will eventually overtake me. If I get a stroke of paralysis you will become a widow."

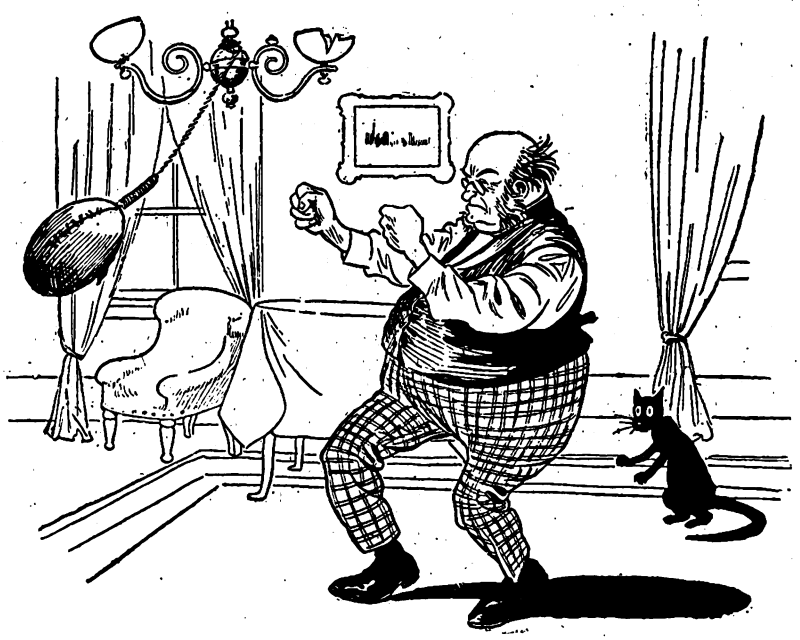
"And you must stand on your head or climb up the side of the house to ward it off."

"No, ma'am. The remedy is very simple. Half-an-hour's work for a few evenings will fix me all right. I met a professional athlete to-day, and, after examining my condition, he told me just what to do. However, if you have the slightest objection—if you want to see me become a victim of the dread paralysis——"

"What did he tell you to do?" she asked.

Mr. Bowser went to the hall and got his package and returned with it, and held it up and replied:

"Simplest thing in the world. It is called a punching-bag. You inflate it and hang it up and punch it. The exercise benefits every muscle in the back and shoulders. It only cost ten-and-six, and I'll get one hundred pounds' worth of good out of it. It would also be a good thing for you to practice on. If you don't object I will inflate it and hang it up and pound it a little this evening."



"I piff! bang! with my left."

"Well, go ahead," she sighed; "but don't blame me."

"Blame you about what? How can I blame you? What can happen? I simply hang the bag on the

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chandelier, remove my coat and punch it. Nothing can be more simple. You don't expect I'm going to knock the house down, do you?"

Mrs. Bowser relapsed into silence, while he went on with the inflating. When the bag was ready he hung it up on the chandelier and removed his coat. He had carried his point without much opposition and was bland over it.

"Now then," he said, as he rubbed the palms of his hands and made ready, "you watch how I do it. It is the greatest exercise in the world. It is warranted to cure dyspepsia, indigestion, flatulency, rheumatism, lumbago, neuralgia and so forth, and to straighten up the spine and give a man a military carriage. It is practised in every college and school in the land, and there are few homes without their punching bags. You see I stand this way—and I reach out this way—and I biff! bang! with my left——"

The biff! bang! was a "swat" which would have burst the panel of a door. The ball shot away and upwards as if fired from a cannon, and about half the glass ornaments of the chandelier came rattling down on the floor. Mrs. Bowser cried out in alarm and made a rush for the dining-room, but Mr. Bowser laughed and reassured her, and added:

"I suppose I overdid it a little for the first blow. I'll just make a rat-tat-tat of it."

He played with the ball for about a minute, and the rest of the trimmings and two of the globes came raining down. The other globes would have followed had not Mrs. Bowser uttered words of vigorous protest. With the perspiration running down his face he paused to reply:

"Never mind a few pence damages. This is great work. I'm feeling a movement of muscles which have been dormant for months. Perhaps you'd better go up stairs and avoid the racket, and I'll fix the bag to a hook on the ceiling."

Mrs. Bowser promptly disappeared, and he got the stepladder and fixed a hook into the ceiling from which the ball was suspended.

When he squared off before it again he was alone and untrammelled, and he meant to knock "seven bells" out of something. The bag had a long play, and as he hauled off on it there was a crash against the ceiling, and a rebound that made him see stars.

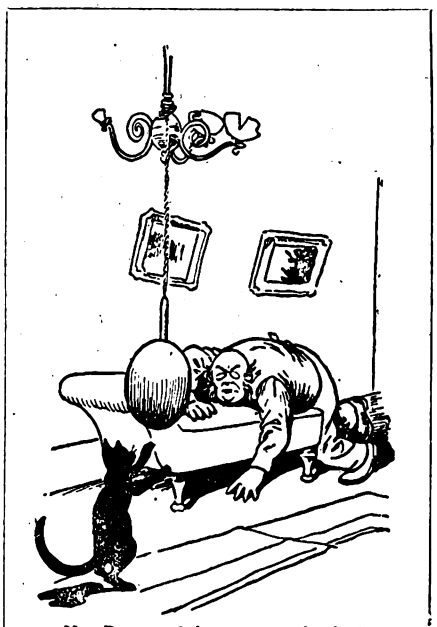
In coming back the bag struck him fair in the face, and for a minute he looked round to see the horse which had kicked him.

"I'm on to that little curve," he muttered, as he got ready for the next round. "I remember now the professional told me the object was to punch and dodge, the same as if boxing with a man. Well, here goes."

Mr. Bowser had never studied the conclusive tactics of the punching ball. Mrs. Bowser who was waiting at the head of the stairs for a calamity, heard him thump and grunt four or five times, and then began to dance about. About a minute later there was a crash and she called down:

"Have you knocked a side out of the house, Mr. Bowser?"

Mr. Bowser hadn't. In his dodging about he had encountered a chair and fallen over it, and had come down so heavily that a referee would have counted him out. It was a long minute before he got up, and then his good nature had departed. No punching bag ever made by mortal man could knock him about with impunity. He rose up with a determination to collapse that bag with one awful blow. He had been warned to go easy, but his outraged dignity demanded revenge.



Mr. Bowser lying across the foot of the sofa.

Mrs. Bowser heard him tapping the bag with his left to get it in motion, and then she heard him draw a long breath like a horse going up hill as he hauled off to deliver the knock-out blow with his right. As he jumped in to deliver the blow he had to dodge the bag, and there was a thump against the wall which rattled things clear to the garret, followed by a howl, a stagger and a fall. She got downstairs in a twinkling, and found Mr. Bowser lying across the foot of the sofa, with the bag playing pendulum above him. His awful blow had missed it and landed on the wall, and his good right hand was already puffing up to beat a cabbage head.

"What—what has happened?" she asked as she thought of arnica and bandages and slings.

Mr. Bowser struggled up like a stricken ox, and he looked from his broken knuckles to the dent in the wall—from the swinging bag to Mrs. Bowser and up to the despoiled chandelier. She was prepared for a furious outburst, but none came. After a long minute he quietly but sternly said:

"Woman, return to your room! In the morning all will be settled. You were against me, and you crept downstairs and struck me with a chair; but our solicitors will settle all that, and you can start for your mother's by the afternoon train. No more, woman—not another word! You have failed again, but this is the last time—the last time, and good-night to you—good-night!"

M. Quad.

Next week: *He whitewashes the cellar and the usual calamity happens.*

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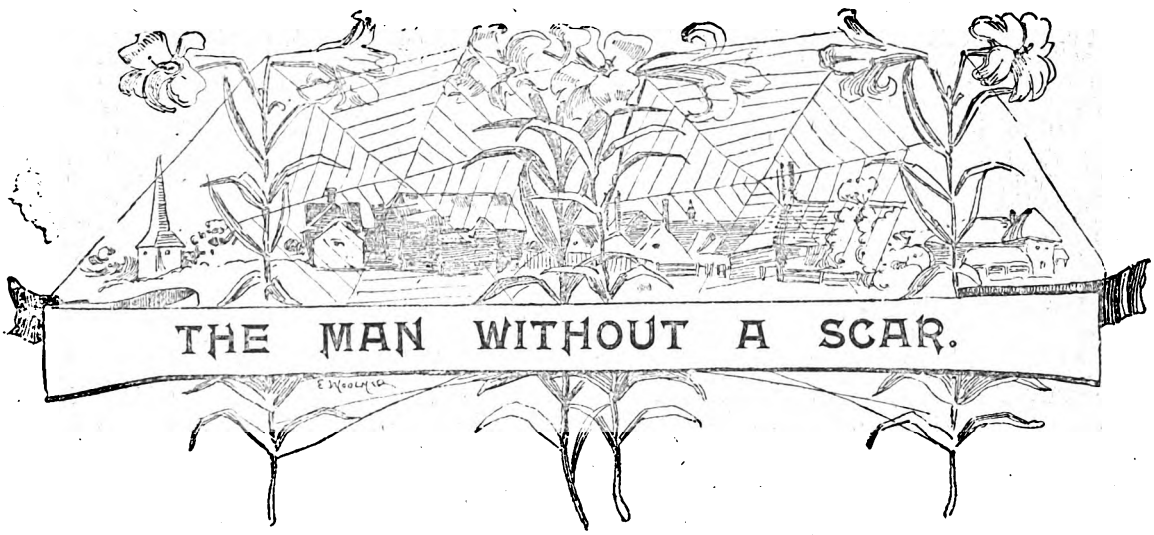

"Oh, Mr. Owen, I've been trying to get a talk with you for quite half an hour, but people seem to be monopolising you. That's the result of being a hero."

The young lady shook her fan in a playful manner at the lieutenant, who seemed rather abashed and disconcerted. She did not give him time to reply, but rattled on:

"So you were one of the party that stormed the heights. How nice! And of course, Lieutenant Allen is a brother officer of yours. He won the V.C. there, didn't he? And you know all about him, of course. Is he a nice young fellow? Is he popular?"

"Well," began the lieutenant hesitatingly, "he came out to India with a new draft about a year after me, and he was sent up to the front with us at once. I knew him at Sandhurst. Yes, he was—well, I suppose most people liked him, you know. I should say so. He seemed to be——"

"Well, Mr. Owen, I shall not ask you to vouch for my popularity, if that is the way you are likely to fulfil the task," returned the girl lightly. "But I am dying to hear about the charge up the hill and how Allen and all of you felt and behaved. It must be a terrible experience to hear the bullets whizzing about you and to see your men and brother officers dropping, and to wonder when your turn was coming. Ugh! Do tell me all about it!"

"But I can't tell you anything about it, Miss Redmond," said the young man desperately. "I wasn't one of the storming party, you see; I wasn't in the fight at all—I was in the hospital with fever, drinking all sorts of stuff out of bottles, and quite out of reach of the bullets. That was just my luck."

It was a very sore point with the young lieutenant that he should have been lying ill with fever while his company was winning glory in a tough struggle with Indian tribesmen.

The glory of that feat of arms had spread all over India and the old country, and when he returned on leave he had been acclaimed as a hero.

People would persist in thinking that he had been one of the gallant storming party; he was continually called upon to give an account of the whole affair, describe his feelings during the charge, and so forth. And some even confounded him with Lieutenant Allen, and asked him if he were not tremendously proud of having gained the coveted V.C.

He reviled the ill-luck which had incapacitated him just when he might have won distinction; that was bad enough, without having to suffer the martyrdom of being taken for a hero when the chance of becoming one had been denied him.

He was mercifully, though accidentally, relieved from his embarrassing position by the arrival of his hostess.

"My dear Mary, we really cannot allow you to claim so much of Mr. Owen's attention," she remonstrated with a smile. "Mr. Owen is my lion, and I wish to introduce him to a lady for the next dance but one. Mr. Owen," she continued, as she walked away with the young soldier, "I am half inclined to wish that you had received some wound during that gallant charge; if you had one arm in a sling, or a big scar across the forehead, you would—— Oh, here we are!"

And she forthwith introduced him to a charming young lady in pink.

They had not been together many seconds when Miss Rushton began talking about the eternal topic of the storming of the heights. She, too, dilated on the glory won by his company in that famous engagement and asked him the usual questions about his feelings and the manner in which the charge was accomplished.

"How proud you must be when you remember that you are one of the gallant men who have done so much to uphold the honour of the country," she said simply, yet with enthusiasm gleaming from her eyes. "I have often wished, since reading of that engagement, that I were a man so that I could wear the Queen's uniform and do battle for my country."

Once more the colour, born of vexation and disappointment, suffused the young soldier's cheeks, yet he felt less annoyed than he had done when spoken to by others.

"I was not in the fight, Miss Rushton," he replied quietly. "I have tried to explain to several of my

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friends that I am not a hero, that I was ill of fever and had no share either in the work or the glory."

"How did you contract the fever?" was her next enquiry.

"In the performance of my duty in the earlier stages of the campaign. I got soaked to the skin in fording a river with a small party when out scouting; exposure laid me low and I had fever on top of a severe cold. That was not very heroic, was it?"

"There are other heroes besides those who take part in actual battle," she replied with a gravity more befitting an older woman. "There is a vast amount of unknown heroism in this world; thousands of men accomplish tasks which, although they do not attract public attention, are just as important to the success of an undertaking as those deeds which call forth cheers and whole pages of newspaper eulogy. A man who does his duty quietly, yet effectively, without the excitement that accompanies an engagement, is just as much a hero as any of those whom you regard as more fortunate. And I happen to know what reconnaissance work on the Indian frontier means to those engaged in it."

"Thank you, Miss Rushton," returned Lieutenant Owen fervently.

He was intensely grateful to this young lady in pink for the kindly words she had uttered; they cheered him and made him better able to bear the disappointment and annoyance of his position.

But he went home that night just as disconsolate as ever. People would shower honour upon him which he had not earned, and he was inclined to echo the words of his hostess about having received a wound—even if it had been a bullet through the heart.

And the worst of it was that within a week he would be in a still more ridiculous position, for a brother officer who had been wounded in the celebrated charge was expected in the town, of which he was a native.

Captain Matthews was certain to tell society that he, Owen, had taken no part in the affair, and although he himself had tried to explain this, yet those who had lionised him would forget it and think him an imposter.

Then there was that girl in pink. She had spoken kindly to him, but what chance would he have with her against the new-comer.

As the thought crossed his mind he flushed deeply; he hardly dared admit it to himself, but he was in love with that girl, and he felt that Matthews would carry her off before his very eyes.

She was the daughter of a wealthy resident; Matthews had had pretensions in that quarter before going to India, and now that he was returning covered with glory and bearing the scar of a wound, his chances must be infinitely greater.

"What is the use of my thinking about her?" groaned Owen, and he groaned again as the answer suggested itself to him.

A fortnight passed and Owen was hoping for a chance of seeing active service again in some distant part of the British Empire.

Matthews had arrived and taken the town by storm; Owen was invited to various functions, but he always had to take an obscure place, and he fancied that people were regarding him—as he had feared—as an impostor. He saw Miss Rushton at all of these assemblies, but he had no chance of getting a minute or two with her, for his wounded rival hovered constantly about her, and her father appeared to encourage him.

As to the girl herself, Owen felt that his cause with her was hopeless; at any rate, she did not seem to tire of the Captain's attentions, and made no effort to enable Owen to enjoy her society.

A boating party had been arranged for this particular day; it was to include a lunch on an island up the river and was to be followed by a small dance in the evening. Lieutenant Owen had been invited and felt bound to accept, but he would have given a good deal to escape the ordeal.

"Of course, Matthews will take the opportunity in order to make a proposal, and he will be accepted," he growled, trying to gnaw the ends of his slight moustache. "But I suppose I must go through it. I hope there will be a scrimmage somewhere soon, so that I can volunteer and get away from England!"

All the boats but one had reached the island and their occupants had landed; that one contained Captain Matthews and Miss Rushton. Mr. Rushton was to have been present, but urgent business had kept him away, although he hoped to arrive in time for lunch. Owen noticed with mortification that Matthews was paying far more attention to his fair charge than to his rowing.

The approach to the island was rather more difficult than it seemed, for there was a quantity of rushes in the water, but just hidden under the surface, and anyone not knowing the place might get an oar entangled in them with serious results.

Most of the party were too intent upon their own business to pay heed to the belated boat, and though Owen was awaiting its arrival in order to secure it, he was too absorbed by his own feeling of vexation to think of the necessity of warning the captain.

Nobody knew how it happened; it is seldom that one can exactly tell how such accidents occur. It is highly probable that Matthews got one oar, if not both, entangled in the rushes; anyhow, to the horror of those who heard Miss Rushton's cry and turned in that direction, the boat turned over and both occupants sank.

Owen knew the place well, and he also knew that more than one person had been drowned owing to the rushes.

Then the spectators saw Lieutenant Owen make a running dive and disappear under the water. A second or two later all three forms came in sight; the men were grasping the limp body of the girl, whose arms were tightly clasped about the neck of the man with a scar on his face.

The lieutenant had gripped the boat with one hand, while with the other he was assisting the captain to support May Rushton.

A boat was hastily pushed off from the island by two men of the party, and in less than five minutes all were safely on *terra firma*.

Miss Rushton was quickly restored to consciousness, and shortly afterwards, some fresh clothing was brought for her by two ladies who had made a hasty trip down the river for the purpose. Fresh garments had also been obtained for the two men, and it was hoped that none of the three would be any the worse for the wetting.

But the possibility of enjoying the day's outing was gone, and the party returned to the starting point in time to meet Mr. Rushton and save him a useless journey up the river.

To prevent delay he had come down in his carriage, so May was helped in preparatory to being driven home. Captain Matthews said good bye at the carriage door, and was rewarded with a smile from May and effusive thanks from Mr. Rushton.

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Owen, consumed with mortification at the thought that even in her peril May had preferred Matthews—had she not thrown both her arms about his neck?—remained in the background and made no attempt to bid her farewell.

The man with the scar was bound to win.

But he was mistaken; as the captain was about to close the door, May pushed it open and smiled at Owen, who briskly stepped forward, while the Captain retired out of politeness—certainly not by choice—and left him in possession.

"How can I thank you sufficiently for your brave deed?" she said sweetly. "I have heard all about it, and if it had not been for you we should have been drowned. And yet you remain in the background and do not give me an opportunity of thanking you."

"I thought," stammered the lieutenant, blushing furiously, and quite unconscious of the significance of his words, "I thought—that is, I mean—well, you seem to prefer him, for you had your arms round him, didn't you?"

"I clutched at the first one for safety," stammered May in her turn. "It wasn't because—I always thought you were a hero, even though you were not one of the storming party!"

"And the man with the scar——?" enquired Owen, bending forward eagerly.

"Must be content with the scar and the glory!" returned May, with downcast eyes. "I am sure that my father will be pleased to see you when you can find time to call on us, and thank you for what you have done."

And then Lieutenant Owen shut the carriage door, feeling as though he was standing on his head; and the carriage drove off with its occupants—Mr. Rushton looking very much shocked at this open love-making, and May's face beaming with a happy smile.

W. STRONG.

MISTRESS (angrily): "See, Bridget, I can write my name in the dust on this mantelpiece."

Bridget (admiringly): "There's nothing like eddication after all, is there, mum?"

MOTHER: "Georgie, I told you to say 'No' if they offered you cake a third time."

Georgie: "So I did, Mamma. Only they offered it to me the fourth time, and you didn't say anything about the fourth time."

THINMAN: "What do you think of the bicycle craze?"

Fatman: "Great thing. I never took so much exercise before in all my life."

"Why, I didn't know you were riding."

"I am not, but my wife is trying to, and I have to see that she doesn't fall off."

"You don't care for a big house and lots of servants do you?" he asked.

"Not at all," she replied promptly.

"Don't you think that love in a flat would be delightful?" he persisted.

"Yes," she answered. "Love in a flat, but not life with one."

He postponed his proposal.

£250 * *

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THE NEWLY-MARRIED PAIR.

"Of course they are," said the captain decidedly. "When you have had as much experience as I have, or even half of it, you will be able to tell a newly married couple as easily as you can read a newspaper. Look at her grey veil! That settles it at once. Going to Jersey for the honeymoon."

The captain of the South Western Steamer nodded his head knowingly to the young man with whom he was conversing, and then looked once more in the direction of the couple to whom he was referring.

"Oh, so the grey veil is the usual thing? Well, captain, you have been married and ought to know. I haven't entered the bonds yet," said Ralph Alston.

"Bless you, I've seen lots of them crossing on these boats," continued the captain. "Don't know that I should care about Jersey for a honeymoon trip, but probably that's because I know the place so well. Ever been there before?"

"No," returned Ralph. "Going over for a fortnight, don't propose to stop at Jersey all the time. I want to see Guernsey!"

The conversation ended at that point and Alston turned his attention to the happy pair.

They didn't appear to be over affectionate; he had always understood that when people were on their honeymoon they made themselves ridiculous by "spooning," but these seemed to be very sensible—too sensible, in fact.

Ralph Alston joined a group of passengers whose acquaintance he had made during the railway journey from London and was soon engaged in conversation. He forgot the married pair for an hour or two, and when they recurred to his mind he looked about for them.

The weather was now becoming rough, and the steamer tossed about in the chops of the Channel.

Steadying himself by a rail, he turned about in search of the strangers. Somehow, that little woman interested him.

What a strange thing it is that a little woman generally chooses a great, burly man for a husband! Ah, he could see her aft, and she was alone.

"Not a bit like the ordinary run of people," mused Alston, "or he wouldn't have left her all alone on deck in this rough sea. But perhaps he is sea-sick and she is a good sailor."

Yet Ralph Alston felt indignant at the idea of a man leaving his bride alone on deck, even though he were ill; it never occurred to him to be indignant with her for not attending to her indisposed bridegroom.

Then he saw her rise from her chair and endeavour to make her way along the deck, it was a difficult task and he went to her assistance as quickly as he could.

"The brute!" he muttered. "Why couldn't he come and help her?"

He gallantly proffered assistance, which was accepted with a smile of gratitude.

He helped her below, and in the smoking-room he saw the husband, which sight naturally increased his indignation against the "brute."

"So he isn't ill at all!" murmured Alston to himself. And he uttered the words more audibly and more savagely as he ascended to the deck once more.

The man's name was Bridge, so much Alston learnt before they arrived at St. Helier. He did not see them during the remainder of the sea trip, but he was pleasantly surprised to meet them at dinner the next day in the same hotel. There were three of them now, the third member of the party being a lady—a friend who was staying in Jersey, Ralph supposed.

Alston bowed to Mrs. Bridge and received a bow and smile in return, but no words passed between them.

Ralph would much have liked to join the party, and was thinking very seriously of devising some scheme for accomplishing this object, when he remembered that his desire was prompted by a feeling of admiration for Mrs. Bridge, and he at once resolved to transfer himself and his belongings to another part of the island. It was not gentlemanly to be courting the society of a married lady.

But fate seemed determined to throw them in each other's way.

He met them at Mont Orgueil and St. Brelade; but, although he resolved to carry out his intention to visit Guernsey, which, he admitted to himself, was the best way to get out of their society, yet he hesitated. He grew indignant with himself, but he seemed powerless to leave the island; the vision of that sweet face and the kissable mouth haunted him persistently.

Towards the end of the first week he was in Georgetown. He entered the Post Office, and as he did so he nearly collided with a feminine figure. It was Mrs. Bridge.

"You are not gone to—to Mont Orgueil?" stammered Alston lamely, after the usual greeting had passed. Whatever made him ask that question he hadn't the slightest idea; as soon as he had uttered it, he flushed at his own foolishness and wished himself on the Caskets, or at the bottom of the sea—anywhere out of her sight.

"No," was the lady's reply in a tone which showed just a litttle surprise. "I didn't feel like it to-day, so they went alone. We were there the other day, you know. Did Mr. Bridge tell you that he was going to-day."

"No," was the confused reply. "I suppose I guessed it."

"Really?"

And then he seemed to come back to himself, and he

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had a hazy recollection that she had wished him good bye in a peculiar manner.

He spent the greater part of that day in saying hard things about his wooden-headedness.

He went to Guernsey—and met Mrs. Bridge and her party.

He returned to Jersey by the next boat.

When he reached London at the expiration of his holiday, his friends remarked that he did not seem to be much the better for it, to which he replied that the heat had upset him. In his own heart he knew that this was not so, and that the real cause was a pretty woman married to "an elephant."

Nearly a year had passed away when Alston one day received a note from an old friend in Wales, asking him if he could not arrange to spend a few days with him.

"We shall be delighted to see you," the letter ran, "and the little ones are anxious to renew their acquaintance with 'uncle.' We shall have another visitor, and as that visitor is of the opposite sex, Jenny asks me to say that she does not think you will be lonely. I endorse that opinion; she's a charming girl, my boy."

Ralph Alston was to take his holidays early that year and this invitation just fitted in with his plans. Charlie Penton had a nice place, according to all accounts, and Alston thought that a stay among the Welsh mountains would brace him up; the atmosphere of Jersey had been rather enervating, so he thought of trying a more breezy locality.

But Penton's idea that the "charming girl" would be an extra inducement was altogether incorrect; as a matter of fact, it almost had the effect of bringing about a refusal of the invitation. Ever since he had set eyes on Mrs. Bridge, Ralph had become practically a woman hater; at least, he shunned the society of the opposite sex.

He decided at length to accept the offer and trust to luck that the charming girl would not spoil his stay.

Ralph Alston was a young man who never set out to keep an appointment or catch a train until the last possible minute and he usually had to "run for it" at the finish. Thus it happened that when he reached the proper platform at Willesden Junction he had only just time to jump into a carriage before the whistle sounded and the train began to move out of the station.

"A narrow shave, that," he muttered half aloud as he sank back into a corner. "But it is generally like that with me. All's well that ends well; I usually manage it although I do run it close. Um, a girl in the other corner; wonder who she is?"

He looked at the other occupant of the carriage out of the corner of his eye as he unfolded his paper; the young lady seemed to be attacked by a similar fit of curiosity, for she cautiously turned her eyes in his direction. So it came about that they caught each others eyes and neither could repress a smile at having been caught.

"I must really apologise for my seeming rudeness," said Ralph frankly, "but—why, we have met before."

"About ten months ago, I believe," returned the other with a light laugh. "How strange that we should meet again!"

Alston walked to the other end of the carriage and held out his hand, which responded warmly to his handshake.

Then they began talking on various subjects, but Alston became more and more constrained in his speech and Mrs. Bridge, noticing this, became more formal in her manner.

"Left alone again!" thought Alston as his mind reverted to the scene on the steamship and the meeting at Georgetown. "That fellow is a brute! I wonder whether she really married him for love? I must confess that she doesn't look as if she were breaking her heart at his absence. I suppose the fervour wears off with some people, even in ten months, but it does seem a bit soon, and she hardly strikes me as the sort of girl who would tire in that period."

He handed her an illustrated journal, but although she took it and made a pretence of looking at it for a moment or two, she clearly had no interest in it, and soon laid it on the seat.

Alston thought he would renew the conversation by asking after her husband.

"How is Mr. Bridge?" was the form of his enquiry. "He is not with you?"

"Mr. Bridge?" Her eyes opened widely. "Why should he be with me?"

"Well," said Ralph with some hesitation, "isn't it usual for a husband to accompany his wife?"

He eyes opened still more widely; then she lay back in her corner and laughed heartily.

"Who told you I was married?" she asked when her merriment had subsided. "And to Mr. Bridge! Why, didn't you see his wife with him? She is my cousin. But I suppose you didn't, for she is a bad sailor and keeps her cabin all the time. Yet you saw her in Jersey. Oh, this is too funny! What ever made you think that I was married—and to him?"

"The captain said so. He declared that he could always tell a newly married couple, and he assured me that you were on your honeymoon. Of course, I believed it—and you didn't deny it!"

"I am not aware that I was ever consulted on that point!" observed the young lady with another laugh, her cheeks colouring a little. "In fact, I do not remember that we have even been introduced to each other by name, you and I."

Ralph Alston promptly settled that matter by declaring his name and asking for hers, which proved to be Rose Barton. Then he wished to know her destination, to see how far they were travelling together; and he mentally resolved to make a change of route if necessary, so that he might have more of her society.

"I am going to some relatives of mine among the Welsh mountains," she informed him. "Mrs. Penton is related to my mother—and, I suppose, to me also."

It was Alston's turn to be astonished now, and he was most agreeably so. She was going to Charlie Penton's. So this was the "charming girl!"

It is needless to say that Alston quite shared his friends' opinion.

When the travellers arrived at their destination they found Penton with his trap awaiting the arrival of the train.

He laughed good-humouredly when he saw them together.

"Jenny said you would meet on the way," he remarked, "and she is right, as she always is. Shrewd woman, Jenny!"

Jenny made another prophecy before her visitors had been twenty-four hours under her roof; it was that "they would make a match of it."

And they did, but it must be confessed that it did not require much shrewdness to foretell that event.

E. A. Williams.

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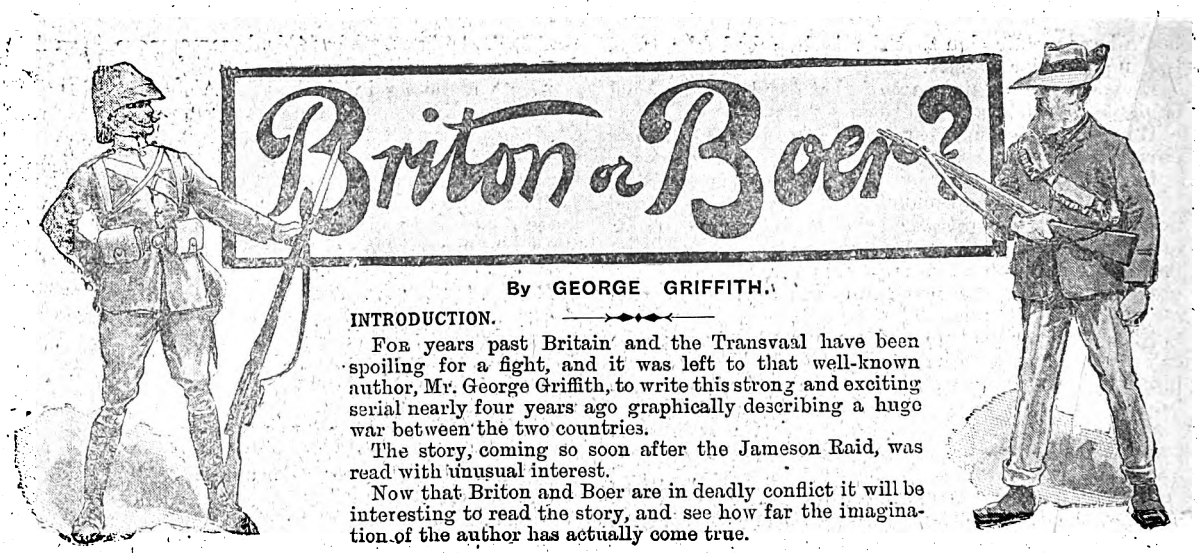

By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

INTRODUCTION.

For years past Britain and the Transvaal have been spoiling for a fight, and it was left to that well-known author, Mr. George Griffith, to write this strong and exciting serial nearly four years ago graphically describing a huge war between the two countries.

The story, coming so soon after the Jameson Raid, was read with unusual interest.

Now that Briton and Boer are in deadly conflict it will be interesting to read the story, and see how far the imagination of the author has actually come true.

CHAPTER XIX.

TREASON OR RUIN?

STARTLING as the news brought by Dmitri undoubtedly was, it was by no means unexpected either by the Prince or the Princess. Both of them were infinitely better informed as to the policy and projects of the Transvaal Government and those of the leaders of the Dutch Africander conspiracy than the State Secretary or his associates had any idea of. This they had in the main gained by the simple and obvious method of using the ample funds at their disposal by taking skilful advantage of the corruption which pervaded Pretorian officialdom from the lowest almost to the highest ranks—the medium being, of course, the discreet Dmitri.

This being so, they were fully aware of the inevitable result of the pitiless policy which the Government had pursued towards the Outlander population of Johannesburg since it had finally thrown off the mask of spurious conciliation and mock humanitarianism on Independence Day at Krugersdorp. As the leader of the deputation had said at the close of the President's memorable speech, the Boers had "spoofed" them, and badly, too.

It could now be seen at a glance that every move which the President and his Government had made, from the surrender of Jameson and his fellow-raiders to the final promise of the franchise, had been part of a subtly-planned and consistently-played game to keep the foreign population of the Transvaal quiet and in good humour, and to completely deceive the outside world as to the true character and intention of the Transvaalers and their rulers.

But now the mask had been thrown off, and the Boer stood revealed both to the stranger within his gates and to the nations beyond his borders in his true character—crafty, cruel, and pitiless.

The story of the fortnight which had elapsed since the President's fatal declaration may be briefly told as follows:

To describe the state of the Golden City that night as one of panic and consternation would be merely to confess the insufficiency of ordinary language. What had happened in the last days of 1895—the mad exodus of women and children, the paralysis of industry, and the temporary collapse of business,—was as nothing to the present state of affairs.

That was panic induced by the very real and by no means unfounded fear that the Boers, knowing, as they did full well, what was going to happen across the border, would take time by the forelock and crush the Reform Movement by force of arms. But then, at least, there was hope of escape for many.

Now there was none, and in place of panic there was the stupefaction of despair, the hopeless waiting for the inevitable stroke of destruction to fall. By evening it was known that the newly-constructed forts and batteries on Hospital Hill, Rosenkopje, the heights above Fox's Reserve, and Reservoir Hill had been manned by full complements of the States Artillery, and that the Government had taken possession of the railway and telegraph systems. Lastly came the news that the Drifts were closed, and this meant that Johannesburg was practically in a state of siege, although no hostile demonstration had been made against it.

Thus the 50,000 white inhabitants of the Rand saw themselves cut off from all communication with the outside world, their enormous wealth—the wealth which they had themselves created in spite of all the Government could do to cripple their industry—at the mercy of their now declared enemies, and themselves threatened either with the nameless horrors of bombardment and assault, or the slower inhumanity of siege and starvation.

As soon as the members of the deputation returned from Krugersdorp a meeting was called at the Rand Club—a very different gathering to the one that had assembled in the same building on the previous night. It was not in any way interfered with by the authorities, and it sat far into the night discussing the difficulties and perils of a situation which might fairly be described as without parallel in modern history.

He fell into a violent rage.

The result of its deliberations was meagre, and yet it was the only possible one. After a night of the most intense anxiety, which, however, passed without the slightest disturbance, a deputation waited on Daniel Schutte, the Commandant of the Rand police, to request that a telegram should be sent to the Government at Pretoria, asking tha

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a petition might be presented to the President on behalf of the inhabitants of Johannesburg. This was granted, and the deputation was taken to Pretoria under an armed guard.

The petition was to the effect that the ordinary amenities of civilised warfare should be observed with regard to those of the Outlander population who found it impossible to give their allegiance definitely to the Republic; that a safe conduct should be given to them out of the Transvaal territory; and that they should have a reasonable time given them to make such arrangements as they could with regard to their business affairs.

To this the reply of the President had been as characteristic under the circumstances as, under other conditions, his dealings with the Reform prisoners had been. He fell instanter into a violent rage, shaking his fist in their faces, and almost shouting:

"You people came here to make money out of the Land, and when you had made it you tried to steal the Land itself. Now when we are going to fight for the Land, where you have become rich, you want to desert it, and take money, and men, and knowledge to our enemies.

"You shall not be allowed to do it. You owe everything you have to the Land, and you shall pay your debt. But we will not be too hard on you. You shall have a week to think of it and talk, and hold your meetings, and we will not disturb you. Then you shall come back and tell me how many of you will stand by the Land which has made you rich. Now go, and when you are talking remember that this Holy Book is our guide, and that it teaches us how to deal with a perverse and stiff-necked generation."

An old leather-bound Bible was lying on the table at which the President was sitting when he received the deputation, and as he spoke these last words he rose from his seat and brought his great fist down with a resounding bang upon it. Then, with a wave of his hand towards the door, he spat on the floor, and turned his back on them.

When they took the news of their reception back to Johannesburg it was received, as it might well have been, with the gravest apprehension, mingled with bitter indignation. So far as could be seen the only alternatives before the inhabitants were becoming subjects of the Republic and devoting their lives and property to its service, or braving the piously brutal threat with which the President had answered their plea for safety and civilised treatment.

The one meant treason to the countries of their birth, and, in the case of the British citizens, taking arms against their own flag and their own countrymen; while the other meant anything that the calculating cruelty of the Boer might devise, or his ingrained savagery accomplish.

It was a desperate predicament. But as the days went quickly by, the British residents on the Rand saw clearly that it was soon to become even more desperate so far as they were concerned. Large numbers of other nationalities—mostly Jews hailing from different parts of Europe, and practically useless from a military point of view—gave in their allegiance, and made tolerable terms for themselves and their property. The majority of Germans and Frenchmen moved quietly out of the town, unhindered by the authorities, but no British subject was permitted to move, save on condition of signing the Declaration of Allegiance—which not a man, woman, or child of them would have done at any price.

By the end of the week of grace, practically the only inhabitants left in Johannesburg were those who owed allegiance to the British flag—English, Scotch, Irish, Cape Colonians, Australians, and Canadians. The others had gone, permitted by the Pretorian Government for reasons of its own to escape the fate which all now believed to be impending over the Golden City.

So far no violence had been offered either to person or property. The mines had been shut down immediately the Proclamation had become known, and all the gold in the Mine offices and banks had been taken away under strong guards to Pretoria, where the Government issued credit notes redeemable at the end of the war.

The kafirs and coolies had been rigidly confined to their locations, and Commandant Daniel Schutte's police, armed with rifles and revolvers and carrying full bandoliers of cartridges, were posted on foot at all the principal street corners and patrolled the streets on horseback in couples.

A tall Englishman looked round at his companions.

So the last day of grace came and found the British citizens of Johannesburg absolutely isolated from the rest of the world, without arms or ammunition, under close police surveillance, and threatened by a practically irresistible force, and yet still steadfast in their resolve not to renounce their allegiance to their country.

Escape was as hopeless as rescue. The Boers had crossed the border on the night of the 16th, and seized every British post along the border from Tuli in the north to Taungs in the south. Elebi, Palapye, Schoshong, Mafeking, and Vryburg, surprised and ungarrisoned, were all in their hands within forty-eight hours of the making of the President's proclamation.

To the south lay the Free State border, and to the west the Portuguese territory, and so on all sides they were cut off. They knew too well that there were no British troops in South Africa that could come to their aid, for it was only too miserably certain that the whole available strength of the British and Colonial forces would be inadequate for the defence of the towns within the British territories.

Early on the morning of Christmas Day—that is to say the day after the expiration of the week of grace—Commandant Schutte rode at the head of a squad of mounted police to the door of the Rand Club, which had been used as the headquarters of a sort of Committee of Public Safety, which had been organised by the principal remaining residents, and demanded to know whether, as he put it, the protection of the Government was to be accepted or not, and if yes, whether the Committee was prepared to go to Pretoria and sign the Declaration on behalf of themselves and their fellow citizens.

The Committee was already sitting in anticipation of such a demand, and the Commandant was invited into the committee-room to hear its decision. He answered the invitation with a laugh, and not over-elegant jest, and told the messenger to go back and tell the chairman to come out and talk to him in the street, as he wasn't going to take the trouble to dismount for the best Red-neck in Johannesburg.

When the messenger took this arrogant summons back to the Chairman of the Committee, a tall, stalwart, fair-haired Englishman, who a week before had been a millionaire, and was now little better than a pauper, looked round at his companions, and said briefly and quietly:

"I suppose that is about all that we could have expected, but I presume that it makes no difference to our decision?"

"For my part it would make it all the stronger if that were possible," said one of the members just as quietly and just as firmly. "Don't go out to the brute. Send him his answer in writing."

"Yes, certainly, that's the thing to do, and put it straight. Let him know that he can shoot us if he can't insult us."

"Tell him to go to——Oom Paul, and begin shooting when he likes. There doesn't seem to be any other way out."

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"We're in the trap, and we may as well die game."

"Tell him to remember how Englishmen and Englishwomen died at Cawnpore and Delhi, if the ignorant old buffer ever heard of them, and say we can do the same."

"You can't make him ashamed of himself, but there is no harm in trying."

"Put it straight and stiff, and shove in a quotation from the Bible if you can."

Such were the expressions which fell in quick succession from the lips of member after member of the committee. The Chairman nodded and took a sheet of notepaper and began to write. When he had filled one side he deliberately blotted it, held it up before him, and said:

They had been in consultation.

"Gentlemen, I hope this meets with your approval."

Then he read:

"To Commandant Daniel Schutte, in command of the Johannesburg Police Force.

"This is to inform you, and to request you to inform the Government of the South African Republic, that on behalf, and with the consent of, the British public now resident in Johannesburg, this Committee of their Representatives refuses unconditionally the terms offered by President Kruger to the Deputation which waited on him on the 17th of this month, and they are prepared to accept any consequences which this refusal may entail."

"The very thing. That's the way to talk to him," came in a chorus. "Sign it and we'll all sign it after you."

The chairman wrote his name with unfaltering hand under the few pregnant words which, as it might well be, consigned himself and several thousands of his fellow-subjects—men, women, and children—to something worse than the horrors of war, and then each member of the committee put his name down on that momentous piece of notepaper in turn. Then it was passed back to the chairman, and he gave it to the messenger, telling him to take it to the Commandant of Police.

The messenger left the room. No answer came back—only a loud, coarse laugh from the street and the clatter of hoofs as the squad rode away, and as this died away down the street towards the Goldfields Hotel, the chairman looked round and said:

"Well, gentlemen, we have taken our decision, and for the present done all that we can do."

That afternoon two men were seated in the private office of the Commandant of Police in the Court House in Church Square. One was the Commandant himself, a somewhat short, stoutly built hard-featured man with dark hair and keen grey eyes, and the other was a broad-shouldered, heavily-built man, bull-necked, and narrow of brow, with brown close-cropped hair and red bristling moustache, with the jaw of a prize-fighter, small bright blue eyes, and a broad nose of the distinctly retroussé type. This was the Chief of Police in the Potchefstroom district, a renegade Englishman named May, who had changed his name, as he had changed his allegiance, for a Dutch one, and was now known as Frederick de Witt Tossel.

They had been in earnest consultation for some time without apparently coming to any agreement on the subject they had been debating. At last Commandant Schutte brought his hand down on the table, and said:

"But, *Allemagtig, kerl*, what are we to do? We can't fire on the town with all the women and children in it before they do anything! It would be murder, and all the world would call us worse than Kaffirs if we did it, for it would come out after the war was over. And they won't do anything. They'll stop here and starve, and that will be as bad. *Verdom!* How are we to obey our orders without behaving like Kaffirs?"

"Kaffirs! I've got it," said Tossel, leaning his arms on the table and bending over towards the Commandant and speaking in a low, hoarse tone. "It's no use going on feeding those niggers any longer. Take the guard away and let them loose. You know what they'll do. Then—we shall know what to do, for the riot will have to be put down—do you see?"

Then there came a silence, during which the two men looked into each other's eyes, and then Commandant Schutte got up with something like a sigh, and said:

"*Duivel*, it's a bad business, but it's the easiest way. God forgive us; but we'll do it."

CHAPTER XX.

The Fate of the Golden City.

When Lieutenant Tossel made his infamous proposal, and Commandant Schutte accepted it—albeit, to his credit, somewhat unwillingly—they both forgot two things. The first was that the average Anglo-Saxon man, from whatever part of the world he hails, is never so bad to deal with as when he is in a very tight place, and the second was that the average Kaffir in the depths of his unsophisticated soul, hates a Boer as he hates nothing else on earth. The result of this forgetfulness was a very unpleasant surprise to both.

The Committee of Public Safety had virtually dissolved itself after giving Commandant Schutte his answer, but there was another committee of an informal sort, though of a much more practical character, which, unknown to them and to everybody else, had been considering the situation from quite another point of view ever since the night of the 17th of December. The committee consisted of four members, each of whom was a very good representative of that part of the Empire which had given him birth.

One was a tall, lean, wiry, sun-baked Australian hailing from the torrid plains of Queensland. His name was Sidney Nesbitt, and he had yet to see his thirtieth year.

Another was a backwoodsman from the forests of British Columbia named Murray Maclure, Scotch by descent, as might be guessed from his name, a year or so on the other side of thirty, hard as iron, shrewd, and full of resource, as a man of his earlier mode of life had to be.

The third was Frank Mellish, a Natalian colonist of two generations, descended from the old sturdy English frontier stock of the Eastern settlements, which is, after all, the backbone of British strength in South Africa. He was not quite twenty-five.

The fourth was a man, well known in Johannesburg, whom I will call Tom Robertson, as that is not his name. He was an Englishman, born in the West Country some forty years before; but he was English only in birth and instincts. By education and experience he was a South African in the widest sense of the word; in fact, it would not, perhaps, be amiss to say that he knew his South Africa quite as well as Oom Paul knew his Bible—if not, perchance, a trifle better.

These four had somehow come together, as though by a sort of mutual affinity, in the rapidly-moving and sometimes troublous vortex of Johannesburg society.

While Commandant Schutte and Lieutenant Tossel were closeted together in the Commandant's room in the Court House, they were sitting in the back parlour behind a closed bar-room in Rissick Street smoking expensive cigars which could no longer be sold, and drinking whisky-and-soda by way of supper, liquor being just then both cheaper and more plentiful than food was in the Golden City. They represented all that was most desperate, and therefore most dangerous, in the beleaguered town, and they were discussing ways and means with the frank recklessness of men who were about to take their last chances in a losing game with Fate.

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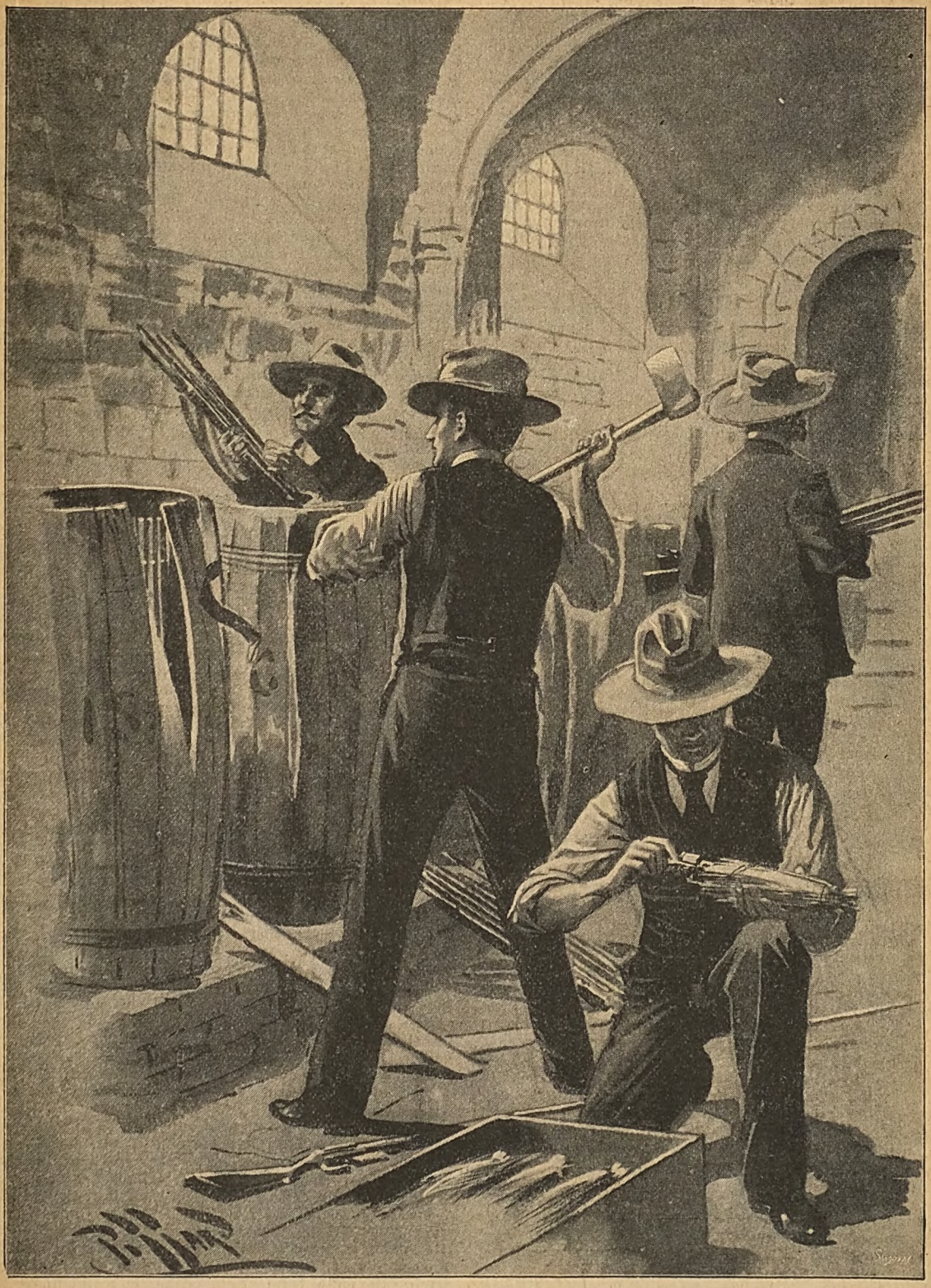

Casks ostensibly filled with liquor were smashed to pieces, and found full of neatly packed rifles and carbines.

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"We can't stop here and starve on smoke and whisky-and-soda, you know," said Mellish, as he finished his first glass, and put it down with a smack on the table. "Something's got to be done, and that pretty quickly, too."

"Something! Yes, but what?" said Maclure. "If we had weapons we might fight our way out under cover of the dark, but then we should leave three or four thousand women and children behind us. What about them? We couldn't take them with us, could we? If we tried to they would only get shot or starved to death on the veld, and where could we take them to?"

"Charlestown's the nearest bit of English ground," said Mellish, half musingly, "but that's pretty near a hundred and twenty miles away through a country that will be swarming with Boers I suppose—and there's Amajuba at the end of the journey!"

"And they may be in Charlestown itself for all you know," said Nesbitt, "thanks to the way the Home Government has been playing the billy-goat with South Africa, while the Dutchmen were getting ready to spring this little game on us. No, it's no good thinking of getting the women and children out. That would be no better than taking them out of the frying-pan and pitching them into the fire.

"Come now, Tom," he went on, looking across the table at Robertson, "just consider yourself in the chair at this meeting, and let's have your views on the subject. What about those rifles you were talking about so mysteriously the other day—the ones that came in during the Reform times, and never got found by the Boers. Are they really in the town, or were you only pulling our legs?"

The whole town was an utter pandemonium.

Robertson knocked the ash off his cigar against the edge of the table, and didn't reply for a minute or two. Then he looked up and said slowly:

"Well, boys, that is not the sort of thing that I'd like to pull a man's leg about just now, so I may tell you that it was perfectly true. There are between twelve and fifteen hundred good Martinis and I should say about thirty thousand rounds of ammunition that the Boers know nothing whatever about, and which have been in Johannesburg for a year or more. There is plenty of dynamite, too, done up in nice handy cartridges with detonators all fixed ready for throwing; but then what's the good? Before we could get the fellows armed the Zarps would be on to us, and if a shot were fired, you know as well as I do that those Germans in the forts would start and shell the town, and think it a picnic.

"If I hadn't known that I would have told you about the guns long ago. As things are, I'll be skinned if I know what to do. You see, it isn't us; it's the women and children. We could take our chance, but with them it's different. They're helpless, and that makes us helpless, too. Hullo! What's that? Good Heavens, the Kaffirs are loose. Hear 'em? Now there'll be the devil to pay, and lots of pitch hot."

As he spoke, there came from the street an undefined, shuffling, rustling noise as of the patter of thousands of bare feet, and above it rose the fierce panting "Hau! hau! hau!" which told them that the Kaffirs were not only loose, but in desperate earnest about something.

They had all sprung to their feet at once. For a moment or two they looked at each other in silence, then Robertson made for the door, saying: "Come on, boys. This is the chance we want. If those chaps only start a good able-bodied riot, we'll have the guns out in no time. Out you go! They know me, and they won't hurt you. It's the Dutchmen they're after.

"Now, look here," he went on, stopping them in the passage before he opened the street door, "you must go round and get all the men you know—men who can shoot, mind; no one else is any good, and start 'em off down here sharp. I'll show 'em where the guns are as they come. We shall have to take our chance now, hit or miss, it's the only one we shall have. Ah! You hear. The Zarps are beginning to shoot. Clear out now, and get the boys down as sharp as you can. It's neck or nothing to-night with all of us. I believe those Dutchmen let the niggers out to make an excuse to shoot. Good-bye, if I don't see you again."

He opened the door and let them out, shaking each one by the hand as he went with a quick, strong grip. Then he locked the door and set about doing his share of the work.

When the others got out into the streets they found them full of dark, hurrying forms all making towards the Court House in Church Square. Each of them was stopped and threatened again and again, but a few words of English always sufficed to show the Kaffirs that they were friends and not enemies, and to convince themselves that what Robertson had said was true.

There was a good deal more danger from the bullets which the police were now firing indiscriminately down the streets as they retired before the rushes of the dusky masses; but these, too, they happily escaped, and they ran on telling every Englishman and Colonial that they met—for most of the men had turned out thinking that the last act of the tragedy had begun, and preferring to die in the open fighting, even if it was only with sticks and stones, than to be murdered helplessly in their houses—what had happened and what they were about to do.

Under such circumstances men who do not lose their heads think and act quickly, and in a wonderfully short space of time the summons had gone round, and the pick of the remaining manhood of Johannesburg was hurrying from all quarters towards Rissick Street in a sort of race to be first to get hold of the coveted rifles.

But by this time the whole town was an utter pandemonium, the scene of a hideous carnival of rage and slaughter. Tossel and Schutte had taken it for granted that the released natives would think of nothing but looting the town and emptying the liquor stores, and then turning on the unhappy residents and giving themselves up to an indescribable orgy of lust and drunkenness, during which they could bring in their men and obey the pitiless orders that had come to them from headquarters.

But the natives, to their astonishment and terror, didn't do anything of the sort. There were some thousands of Zulus and Basutos and Pondos amongst them, and for weeks past, as though they had known what was coming, they had been preparing silently and stealthily to pay off some of the long-standing debt that they and their forefathers owed to the hated Boers. They had buried weapons, knives, hatchets, knob-kerries, and assegais, in all sorts of places about the mines and their compounds, and the first thing they did when they found themselves free was to recover these.

Then they did one, at least, of the things the Boers expected them to do. They battered in the doors of the liquor bars, helped themselves to all they could lay their hands on, and set fire to the rest to light them on their way of vengeance and destruction. But then, instead of looting the other shops or attacking the houses of the residents, they closed in from all sides on the Police Barracks by the Goods Station, the Government Building in the middle of Market Square, and the Court House in Church Square, driving the police before them, falling in scores under the

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bullets, but still crushing them back by sheer weight of numbers and fury of attack.

Meanwhile Nesbitt, Maclure, and Mellish had flown hither and thither through the confusion, giving their warnings and their messages, and Robertson had got a squad of about a hundred men that he knew personally in Rissick Street, armed with rifles, bayonets, and revolvers, that seemed to come as if by magic from nowhere.

The truth was that they came out of his own house. The first score or so of men who had arrived whom he knew and could trust, he had taken in and put to work, and these had set about dismantling the house and outbuildings as though their intention was to level them with the ground.

Down in the big cellar, under the bar-room, casks, ostensibly full of good liquor, were smashed to pieces and found full of neatly packed rifles and carbines. Cases of whisky and champagne held revolvers and cartridges carefully stowed in the straw cases that should have held the bottles. Floors were pulled up, and ceilings torn down, mattresses and pillows were cut open, and all sorts of impossible places ransacked, and from everywhere rifles, revolvers, cartridges, and bandoliers were dragged out.

Then the front door was thrown open, names were shouted out, and men began to file quickly into the bar-room. Here Robertson and his assistants, standing behind the bar, passed the weapons and ammunition over, and the file disappeared through the back door leading into Joubert Street.

In a marvellously short space of time five hundred men were armed and ready for action, and these Robertson, who promptly assumed unquestioned command, divided into two parties, one of which he dispatched to the Park Station, with orders to pull up the rails and cut the wires on both sides of it. The other he marched down to Commissioner Street, and then along to the Empire Music Hall, which he broke open without the slightest ceremony.

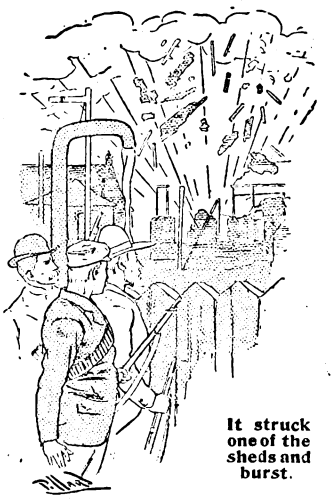
Then, leaving a strong guard in the street and at the door, he got lights and went in with a dozen men. Under the stage and beneath the floor of the hall, covered by old scenery and all sorts of litter, and stacked away in old packing-cases and dress baskets, he discovered another small arsenal of weapons and ammunition, which were promptly passed up and delivered to those who had been admitted by the guard to the hall, and were eagerly waiting for them.

From the music-hall he went and did the same thing at the Standard Theatre in Market Street, and by the time this was rifled of its long-hidden war-like stores he had about twelve hundred men ready for work. These naturally sorted themselves out, according to their various nationalities, so that, in accordance with plans that had been many a time hopelessly talked over—plans that they would have carried out before but for the impossibility of getting arms without being discovered—Nesbitt, Maclure, and Mellish found themselves at the head of a well-armed troop of three or four hundred Australians, Canadians, Natalians, and Cape Colonials.

There were only about a thousand police actually in Johannesburg, for the authorities had trusted almost entirely to the forts and batteries to overawe the city. Had it been daylight these thousand well-armed men might have been sufficient to clear the streets, but it was a dark, drizzly night, and they stood no chance against the thousands of half-drunken, infuriated savages which the act of their own commanders had let loose upon them. Hundreds were shot, but hundreds more sprang up out of the darkness and came on. Those in the streets were surrounded and pulled down and battered to death to a man.

While this was going on something else even more serious had been happening. Robertson, when the wires had been cut and the rails pulled up, held a hurried consultation with his three captains and decided to join in the attack on the police barracks with their full strength, for it was known that large quantities of arms and ammunition were stored there. If they could take that and get the arms served out before daylight there would be a chance, at any rate, to make a good fight for their lives and liberties, instead of being starved to death or shot down helplessly like cattle stricken by rinderpest.

The three companies had been marched into the gardens between Plein Street and De Villiers Street, in which the telephone office stands, and there the consultation had taken place. Just as the decision had been arrived at, a pale flash shone through the misty darkness in the direction of Hospital Hill; then came the bang of a gun and the screech of a shell overhead. It struck one of the sheds of the goods station and burst. Almost instantly a bright glare of flame sprang up to join the other conflagrations that were now raging in the Golden City.



It struck one of the sheds and burst.

"Come along, boys!" Robertson shouted as he saw the flames leap up. "There isn't a minute to lose now. We must have those guns out of the barracks and then get the women and children into something like safety in a hurry. The whole place will be burning before daylight, for those blackguards will blaze away now so long as there's a house standing or a living thing in Johnny'sburg. Yes, there they go all round. I guess that means that the Zarps have cleared out and left us to face the music. Come on, boys, let's get it over!"

CHAPTER XXI.

The Forlorn Hope.

Although it was less than a couple of hundred yards to the police barracks, they only just got there in time to save the priceless arms and ammunition, for the Kaffirs were on the point of firing them. Robertson, who spoke three or four of the Kaffir dialects like a native, ran in among them, shouting to them to desist, and telling them that if they burnt the building they would destroy the guns that were wanted to fight the Dutchmen with. Their leaders caught the idea at once, and as natives, and especially Zulus, are nearly always ready to obey an Englishman who speaks his own language, they began flocking round him, asking him with many gesticulations what they should do to destroy the hated Dutchmen.

The first thing that came to his mind was the dynamite stored at the old Johannesburg station on the Station Plein, and in the mine magazines along the Reef. He told them to go and take all they could find, and then creep up as near to the Boer's forts as they could and throw it in. Then when they had got the arms the white men would come and help them.

He told them this more in the hope of getting the worst of them away out of the town than in the expectation that they would do very much damage to the enemy. But the idea of blowing the Boers up in their own forts caught on like wild fire, and hundreds of them rushed away, yelling and shouting and dancing like so many demons in the light of the blazing buildings to do his bidding.

Some hundred or so of the police had either taken refuge in the barracks, or had been caught there when the Kaffirs attacked them, and these had barricaded the doors and were shooting from the windows into the crowd. But they now speedily found that they had an enemy to deal with

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very different from the naked and almost unarmed Kaffirs, for the three troops rapidly deployed along the Harrison Street and Bree Street fronts, and poured a terrible volley from six hundred rifles into the windows.

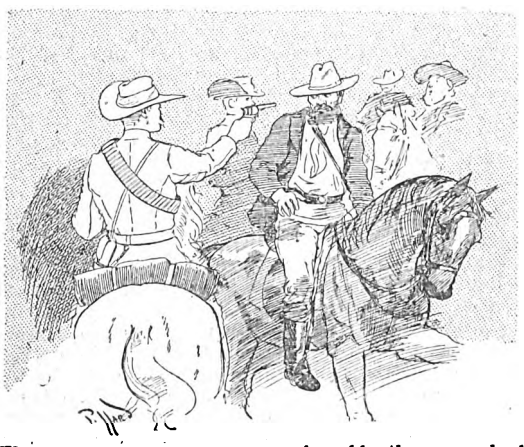
Then a rush was made for the main entrance, the doors were battered in with rifle-butts, and the surviving policemen, terrified by the sudden apparition of this mysterious force, dropped their weapons and ran away to hide themselves as best they could. In a very few minutes the barracks were rifled of their contents, and the weapons and ammunition passed out into the street, and hurriedly distributed to the crowds of men who were waiting for them.

The next work was to get the women and children out of the private houses as quickly as possible, for the shells from the batteries were now dropping fast all over the town. Old Johannesburg and Marshall's Town—that is to say the heart of the city lying to the north and south of Commissioner Street—were blazing furiously in a score of places. The Grand National and the Goldfields' Hotel, Barnato Buildings, Eckstein's, and several large blocks of shops in Commissioner Street and Market Street, were sending up volumes of flame and smoke to the dark, wet skies.

Warehouses and manufactories along Marshall Street, and in the City and Suburban township, were shedding a lurid glare which showed the great, gaunt headworks and tall, slim iron smoke-stacks of the mines along the Reef with weird and ghastly distinctness, until the showers of sparks and burning fragments, hurled far and wide by the bursting shells, fell among the woodwork and the coal-heaps and set them blazing too.

But, happily, in the residential parts of the town to the north and west of the business centres, in Bramfontein, New Johannesburg, and Doornfontein, where the houses are nearly all detached, or semi-detached, and standing for the most part in their own grounds, not nearly so much damage was done, though here and there a house struck by a chance shell, or fired by a drunken Kaffir, had been wrecked or was in flames.

But still it was bad enough, in all conscience, even here.



The curt order to dismount was enforced by the approach of a revolver.

Crowds of women and children were being hurried through the red mire of the streets, away from the once comfortable homes in which they were leaving nearly everything that remained to them in the world behind them. There was not a minute to be lost, for the flames were spreading fast in every direction, and the artillerymen, not satisfied with the devastation their shells had worked, were beginning to send storms of bullets from their machine-guns into the abyss of flame and smoke which had once been the marvellous New Ophir of the South.

No one had any definite plans beyond getting as many of the helpless ones as possible out of immediate danger, and to this end their escorts guided them as well as they could down through Doornfontein and Jeppestown and out on to the road towards Elandsfontein.

And now gradually the fire from the forts began to slacken, for the artillerymen had found other work to do than firing into the sea of smoke and flame below them. Thousands of drink-maddened Kaffirs, armed with all sorts of weapons, carrying large packages of dynamite cartridges, had been swarming up the hills and creeping up close round the forts, careless of the shells and the hail of machine-gun bullets that went whistling away over their heads to be wasted in the burning town below.

It was not until they came charging up out of the darkness to the very muzzles of the guns that the artillerymen saw them and recognised the peril which threatened them. Scores were, of course, swept down at first onset, but where a score fell a hundred came on. Then the dynamite cartridges began to fall in showers inside the forts, exploding ... spreading death and ruin through the crowded ... ures. Then the Kaffirs, drunk with liquor and the ... for battle, climbed up to the earthworks over the heaps o. dead bodies that lay about them, and axe and knife and club went to work in the wild exultation of pitiless revenge so long as a policeman or an artilleryman could be found alive to slay.

Meanwhile the two men who had so unwittingly let loose the destroying storm which had burst in such fearful fashion over their own heads, had managed to fight their way on horseback with about a score of their best mounted men out of Church Square and up through Eloff Street to Park Station, hoping to get an engine and a carriage to take them to Pretoria, where they intended to report simply the revolt of the British residents and the Kaffirs, and the consequent destruction of Johannesburg in obedience to orders.

They had, of course, no idea of the good use to which the English and Colonials had been putting that time of darkness and confusion. If they had known that there were nearly five thousand of the men armed with Martinis, Lee-Metfords, and the new German Mauser rifles which had been seized at the police barracks, and that of these nearly a thousand were mounted on horses which had been taken out of the stables of the town or captured from the police, they would have probably thought it necessary to amplify their story somewhat.

But they really knew very little of what had happened. They knew that some of the English—as they termed everyone, save themselves, who spoke English—had somehow got hold of a few rifles, and had perhaps done some damage with them, but as the Commandant had previously issued orders for his men to gradually withdraw to the forts when the rioting began, and leave the Kaffirs to their work of destruction, he didn't trouble himself about their disappearance.

The one thought of the two worthies was how to get away from the burning town to Pretoria, make their report, and come back by daybreak with sufficient mounted burghers to cut off such fugitives as might have escaped with their lives, and so settle the Outlander question.

But when they reached the Park station they found the wires down and the rails up, which certainly did not look like the work of Kaffirs.

On making this unpleasant discovery they started off down the line to ride to Elandsfontein, the junction where the Krügersdorp and Johannesburg branch line joins the main line from the Natal border to Pretoria. Here at least they would be certain to find the wires intact, and an engine to take them to the capital, should they be wanted.

This, however, was just what Commander Robertson, as he may be properly called for the present, had no intention of allowing anybody to do if he could prevent it. With the instinct of an old campaigner and a born strategist, he had long seen that Elandsfontein was the key both of

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Johannesburg and Pretoria, and he saw now that the one chance of anything like success in the desperate venture, which might indeed well have been called a forlorn hope, lay in seizing it at once, and holding it for the time being at all costs.

Consequently, the moment the police barracks had been captured he had dispatched Nesbitt and Maclure with their troops of between three and four hundred men each to ride out, surround the station, pull up the metals, and cut the wires to the north, seize all the rolling stock in the depôt, and prepare trains for the south with all possible speed.

The result of this manœuvre was that Commandant Schutte and Lieutenant Tossel, with their score of men, reached the outskirts of the junction only to ride unsuspectingly into the middle of Nesbitt's troop, who promptly took them all prisoners with the unfortunate exception of the English Boer, who had somehow scented the danger more quickly than the others, and had turned tail and had ridden for his life as fast as his horse's legs could carry him, leaving the rest to their fate.

Knowing the country to a yard, he managed to keep out of harm's way till he reached Zuurfontein, the first station on the Pretoria side of the junction, from which he sent the message which resulted in Mr. Secretary Leyds being so suddenly called away from the pleasant society in which he was eating his dinner on that memorable New Year's Eve.

The wrathful amazement of Commandant Schutte, on finding himself a prisoner in the hands of those whom he believed to be unarmed, and at the mercy of the artillerists of the Johannesburg forts, was inadequately portrayed even by the quite unprintable language which he made use of when the fact was actually brought home to him by the curt order to dismount, enforced by the approach of a revolver barrel to within about two feet of his face.

Still, he got down, and his men did the same so soon as they saw that instant surrender was the only alternative to sudden death. Their arms and horses were, of course, appropriated with equal promptness, and formed a welcome addition to the war material of Captain Nesbitt's troop.

The junction was already in the hands of the Johannesburgers when the capture was made. It had fallen almost without the firing of a shot, and that for two very obvious reasons. In the first place, those who might have defended it were taken absolutely and utterly unawares by the appearance of the armed British force, which had sprung apparently from nowhere, and in the second place the very last thing that the Pretorian Government would have dreamt of was what had actually happened during the last two or three pregnant hours in Johannesburg.

The heart of the railway system of the Transvaal, although it contained a large amount of rolling-stock, a couple of train-loads of war-like stores, consisting of field-pieces, machine-guns, small-arms, and ammunition waiting to be forwarded to the frontiers as required, had been left ungarded save by a few police and artillerymen, because it was looked upon as being as absolutely safe from attack as Pretoria itself.

If it had not been for the fact that the Johannesburghers had found themselves, when the terrible task of the exodus from the ruined city had at length been achieved, with some three thousand women and children dependent on them for protection and escort to a place of safety, this capture of Elandsfontein might have been a very serious thing for Pretoria itself. It is true that many of the women, with heroic self-forgetfulness, entreated their protectors to allow them to be taken prisoners by the Boers, and to make a dash for the Natal border, where they could join hands with the loyal colonists, but this, of course, was not to be thought of for a moment by such men as the leaders of the Forlorn Hope from the Golden City.

As party after party came up, some on foot, some on horseback riding double with the mounted men, and others in every kind of conveyance that could be laid hold of in the hurry of the moment, the women and children were stowed away at once into the trains that had been got ready by the bewildered and terrified officials under pain of immediate shooting in case of refusal or delay.

Meanwhile an engine with a car-load of men had been sent up the line to Zuurfontein to pull up the rails and cut the wires and so sever all communications with Pretoria—which, unhappily, was not done until just after Lieutenant Tossel had sent his message and followed it to the capital on an engine which happened to be in the station.

There was not a minute to be lost.

Almost simultaneously a train of open trucks, carrying two hundred men and two machine-guns, with ample ammunition, had been dispatched down the line to Germiston, where the line from the Free State border joins the one from Natal, with orders to destroy all communication with the Free State, cut the wires on the Natal line, and, if possible, go on and seize Heidelberg about twenty miles lower down.

Two trains of the Cape Government Railway saloon carriages with three powerful engines, two of the Natal trains, each with an engine, which had been seized by the Boers on the outbreak of hostilites, were waiting at the junction till they should be wanted, and, in addition to these, about twenty of the Netherlands Railway Company's carriages and five of their engines had been taken by the Johannesburgers, in addition to the two ammunition trains.

There was thus ample rolling-stock for the conveyance of the fugitives to the Natal border at Charlestown. The only question was getting them there through the hundred and ten miles of hostile country, which, within a few hours, and in spite of all precautions that could be taken, would be swarming with the peasant-soldiers of the Republic.

The project was indeed a desperate one, but it was the only one that held out the faintest hope of success. Behind them to the one side were the blazing ruins of Johannesburg, and on the other Pretoria; east and west were wide stretches of country impassable to them, hampered as they were. More than a hundred miles away to the south-east lay their only possible land of refuge, and there, under the shadow of Amajuba Hill, they might find their countrymen fighting for life and country on the scene of their former shame.

(To be continued.)

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "Fortune's Sport," by Mrs. Williamson, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. John Sewell, of "The Lund," Lamplugh, Cockermouth. Attempts for this week's prize may deal with ANY SUBJECT and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand London, W.C., by Monday, April 23rd. Post-cards only, please.

The Retort Courteous.

At a young folks' social party held recently, the hostess noticed one of the girl guests wiping her spoon on the clean tablecloth, and wishing to make an example of her for her bad manners at table, she said:

"Is that the way you do at your own house, Mary Green?"

"Please, ma'am, no," replied the girl spoken to, quite innocently, "we always have clean spoons placed beside us there."

With that the hostess wished she had never spoken.

J. S.

The War Fever.

The following conversation was heard in a well-known drapery establishment whose head is colonel of the local volunteers!

Traveller: "Can I see Mr. Blank?"

Shopwalker: "Sorry, sir, the colonel is out."

Traveller: "Oh, the manager will do."

Shopwalker: "Very sorry, sir, the major is also out."

Traveller: "Then, the under manager."

Shopwalker: "Very, very sorry, sir, the sergeant has just gone."

Traveller: "Ah! I'll call to-morrow. You can mention Captain Smartman was here."

J. T. M.

One for the Major.

On a recent occasion, a Birmingham officer in the army and his brother officers gave a dinner. One of the guests present was a fire-eating, quarrelsome major, who took advantage of his rank to lay down the law of military discipline in a somewhat offensive manner. The Birmingham gentleman listened to the oracle in silence for some moments, and then observed during a lull:

"I say Major, I saw a man to-day who would give any sum of money for the pleasure of kicking you."

"Kicking me!" exploded the incensed officer. "Kicking me! I call upon you to name him instantly!"

"I hardly like to tell you," said the gentleman with assumed reluctance.

"I insist upon knowing," roared the Major, livid with rage.

"Oh, well, then, I'll tell you. It was a fellow named Jones, who has lost his legs in an explosion, and pulls himself about on wheels."

C. R. F.

The Colonel and the Lady.

Colonel Baden-Powell formed one of an evening party which a young lady of his acquaintance favoured with a song. A number of gentlemen who were not intimate with the lady desired the Colonel to request her to sing again.

Going up to the lady the Colonel made known the request.

"I hope you'll excuse me," was her reply, "but really, I cannot. If I were to sing again I would be blown."

Returning to the gentlemen Baden-Powell was questioned if she would sing.

In a voice loud enough to be heard over the whole room, he replied:

"She says she'll be blowed if she will."

F. W.

A Cheap Dinner.

An Irishman walked into Lipton's dining rooms in the City Road the other day and ordered one of his 4½d. dinners.

Presently a man seated at another table asked the waiter if he would fetch him a pint of bitter ale, at the same time giving him threepence.

The waiter was soon back, but, by mistake, gave the bitter ale to the Irishman, who, seizing the chance, soon made it disappear with his dinner, and on leaving he exclaimed:

"Well, Oi expected soup, meat, vegetables, and pastry, but, begorra! Oi'm hanged if Oi know how Lipton manages to give away a pint ov bitter ale in the bargain, an' all for 4½d.!"

E. K.

An Obliging Emigrant.

An Irish emigrant, on his arrival at Liverpool stopped for a moment to examine a coat hanging in front of a clothing store, when the proprietor asked him if he would try on a coat or two.

"To be shure Oi will," he responded good naturedly, consulting his watch, and he went in and set to work.

No matter how often he found his fit, he tried on another and another till he had tried on about fifty.

Then again looking at his watch, he asked for his own coat, saying:

"Toime's up; Oi can't stay no longer."

"Don't you want a coat?" said the shopman.

"No," said the Irishman surprised. "Shure, ye asked me to try on a coat or two, and Oi've done it. Hang the man who won't oblige another when he can."

W. L.

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Would Have Her Removed.

A Scotchman in London was at the bedside of his dying wife, who had been born in the Highlands, and always retained a strong affection for her "ain countree."

"Promise me," she said to her husband, "that you will bury me in the Hielans, for I can never rest quiet here."

Tammas was silent a moment, not liking the thought of the expense. Then he said.

"Weel, weel, I'll jist see aboot it; if I find that ye canna rest quiet here, I'll jist hae ye removed to the Hielans." W. C. L.

A Poser

At Plymouth there is, or was, a small green opposite the Government House, over which no one was permitted to pass. Not a creature was allowed to approach save the General's cow; and the sentries had particular orders to turn away anyone who ventured to cross the forbidden turf.

One day an elderly Duchess, having called at the General's, in order to make a short cut bent her steps across the lawn, when she was arrested by the sentry calling out, and desiring her to return and go the other road.

She remonstrated; the man said he could not disobey his orders, which were to prevent anyone crossing that piece of ground.

"But," said the Duchess with a stately air, "do you know who I am?"

"I don't know who you may be, ma'am," replied the immovable sentry, "but I knows who you b'aint—you b'aint the General's cow."

So the Duchess wisely gave up the argument, and went the other way. J. T.

The War Correspondent Obeyed Orders.

Murat Halstead, the great journalist of war times, tells of the story of how he went to General Sherman at headquarters once for the "latest news from the front." He was armed with many fine introductory letters, but decided to rely mainly on one given him by Sherman's brother-in-law.

He found the General at a little railroad town in Kentucky, pacing uneasily to and fro in front of headquarters' tent, his great mind revolving some critical plan of campaign.

Halstead advanced and presented Ewing's letter.

The General opened it somewhat impatiently, read a few lines, folded it, and said:

"Ah, you come from Ewing, and you desire to have 'all the latest news'—the 'next probable move' of our army, eh? There's a train leaving this town for Cincinnati at two o'clock. Here, take this ticket, and step over there and get your dinner, and then get on that train."

"Well, but, General Sherman—" began the newspaper man, hoping to re-open the case; but Sherman waved him off.

"Go over and get a good dinner; we have plenty, and always strive to treat our friends well—but be sure you don't miss that two o'clock train!" And Halstead, realising the sort of a man he had to deal with, wisely obeyed. J. A.

Tommy's Temperature.

Tommy had had pneumonia, so had been for some time in hospital, where they had treated him so well that he was much adverse to the prospect of being discharged as "cured."

One day the doctor was taking his temperature, and while Tommy had the thermometer in his mouth the doctor moved on, and happened to turn his back.

Tommy saw his chance. He pulled the thermometer out of his mouth and put it into a cup of cocoa, replacing it at the first sign of the medico turning.

When that worthy examined the thermometer he looked first at Tommy, then back to the thermometer, and gasped:

"Well, my little man, you're not dead, but you ought to be!" A. H.

It Was, Too!

A clergyman who was in the habit of quoting from various sermons, without giving due credit to the authors, did so to such an extent as to provoke the ire of one of his parishioners. On a certain Sunday a quotation was made by the pastor.

The parishioner rose from his seat and said:

"That's Blair."

Another quotation soon followed.

"That's Fuller."

Still another theft.

"That's Channing," said the accuser, as he arose from his pew cushion for the third time.

"Put that man out," bellowed the reverend gentleman.

"That's original," said his critic, "that's his own." T. S.

Sat on His Hat.

On one occasion, when a public reception was given to Daniel Webster at a hotel in Boston, a particularly obsequious office-seeker was introduced. The man kept on bowing and scraping until the great man was tired of him, and, bidding him good-day, settled down heavily into the nearest chair. But the man, instead of passing on and giving a chance to the next comer, lingered near and seemed to have something still on his mind, though he looked very blissful. Webster observed this and said, not very good-naturedly:

"May I ask you, sir, if you want anything more of me?"

"Oh—oh, no!" said the man, smirking; "only perhaps I may be permitted to remark that I am proud to say that my hat is having the estimable honour to occupy the same chair with Daniel Webster!"

Webster had, as a matter of fact, sat down on the man's tall beaver hat. W. E.

OUR BOAT-RACE COMPETITION.

The official result of the Boat-Race, as given by the judge, was:

Winner: CAMBRIDGE.

Distance won by: 20 lengths. Time: 18min. 47sec.

Of course, most of the competitors gave Cambridge to win, but nobody gave the exact distance, as it was not expected that the historic event should be such a procession; but several gave the correct time.

The prize of £5 has been awarded to Mr. Henry Caudell, of 23 High Street, Woolwich, whose coupon read: Winner, Cambridge. Distance won by, 18½ lengths. Time, 21min.

His two witnesses were: Mr. A. S. Horton, of 132 Robert Street, Plumstead, S.E., and Mr. George Medcalf, of 16 Admaston Road, Plumstead, S.E., and £1 has been sent to each.

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THEIR hut stands on the "Old Road" in the outskirts of Crow Hollow. It was once used as a shoemaker's shop, and boasts of but one room, but the happiness of the Flanderses depends to no great extent upon space.

An air of general decay has settled heavily upon the cabin, which seems to be shrinking into the earth. The window is broken and stuffed with rags and a hat or two, the slates are falling off, and the settling of one corner suggests that a high wind would complete its demolition.

It would seem, too, that the little time-painted abode had slipped from its original foundation, for so close does it stand to the road that a passing waggon-load of hay has been known to lift the door which unfortunately swings outward, from its hinges.

Jim, the founder of the family, tramped into Crow Hollow (from no one knew where) and took possession of the hut more than forty years ago. He was repeatedly invited to vacate by the town's-people, but he grinned at them for their trouble, and knocked their dogs about, and persisted in staying.

Here he lazed and fiddled away the days and nights—except when he visited a villager's hencoop, or, by way of diversion (after drinking his fill of bad whiskey), smashed a neighbour's window, or "held up" an inoffensive farmer for a gallon of cider.

One morning, after a tribe of gypsies had left the Hollow, a red-cheeked young woman wearing a man's hat, was seen frying pork in a camp kettle at the rear of Jim's shanty, while he, with a conspicuous black eye and a missing tooth, was lounging about the door.

The years that followed brought children and an increased bad reputation to the pair.

Was anything missing, no one questioned who were the culprits; the constable simply arrested a Flanders—if the old man was drunk and Tom was not to be found, the old woman was substituted. So it occurred that the Flanderses, as an individual family seldom graced the home.

Martha, the little one, toddled about, dodging blows and making friends with stray cats, until she was big enough to climb the stone wall which divides the "Old Road" from the cemetery, and there, in a world of gravestones and daisies, she found a safe hiding-place.

There she spent whole days, creeping home only when her sharp, little ears could detect neither oaths nor blows mingled with the strains from the violin. There she whimpered nonsense to gravestones, confiding to them that her mother used to be pretty and have white teeth.

One summer when Martha was grown tall and awkward, she crept into the village school.

She did not take to books readily, and it hurt somewhat to be called "a Flanders," but she mastered the alphabet before she gave it up.

One day Jim came into school to see his child. He was intoxicated, but that she did not mind so much as that he should steal the dinner basket and books from the one little girl who had befriended her.

She cried a little over the lesson book which she had borrowed, before she put it back in the teacher's desk that night.

She did not go to school again, but spent her time, mostly, sitting in the doorway of the hut, looking across the graveyard, and wishing the gaol was further away, and her father was not Jim Flanders.

Unusually reckless must have been the Flanderses, for it came about one summer that, with the exception of Martha, they, an unbroken family, were sojourning in the county gaol.

Thirty miles (in the opposite direction from the temporary home of Tom and the old man) was not far for Martha to walk, and it brought her to Dunville.

She was accosted by the Tabor sisters, who, in great distress, were trying to get old Spooney to take his head from the apple boughs and trot along as he should.

Without doubt Spooney was surprised into obedience, for to have a long-legged girl to crawl along his back and pull his ears and take the apples out of his mouth was a new experience.

For this timely assistance the Tabors were duly grateful, and Martha was invited to ride. It may have been that my heroine was nervous from fasting, and her long walk, or perhaps the little woman seemed over trustful, thus appealing to the romantic in her, for certain it is that she romanced dreadfully in reply to their kindly questionings.

Before the Tabor cottage was reached she was told that she might try the housework for the sisters.

Poor Martha, so earnestly did she take it up, that broken dishes, broken window panes and even broken broomsticks were the results.

The Tabors were astounded, but their faith in Martha was great; a girl who could start old Spooney from a meal of apples was to be treated with consideration.

"It's her great strength, Nancy; we must be patient."

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Just then came a crash from the kitchen, and Miss Nancy decided it was time to be firm.

"We'll have to discharge her," she sighed, as she made her way to the kitchen.

There on the floor sat Martha, rocking to and fro and moaning, "Oh, dear, what have I done, what have I done!" while her tears were raining down upon the fragments of the china bowl that had descended to the Tabors from their great-great-grandmother. But Miss Nancy did not discharge her; in fact, she even concealed the mishap from Lucy.

Martha's hair became more manageable, and her cheeks filled out. In a few months Miss Nancy had taught her to spell a few words, which pleased the girl indifferently; but when she discovered in herself an appreciation for colour combinations and, with a little instruction, was able to weave hints from nature into a little cape for one of the sisters, she was very happy indeed.

One night Miss Lucy was horrified to find a drunken tramp in the kitchen; Martha was pressing a bundle into his hands. The man swaggered out of the house, grinning maliciously, while Martha, with a tiny red spot on either cheek, hurried about her work.

Martha did not come to the sitting room that night to prayers.

"They're stole," she made answer, when Miss Nancy intimated that another gown would better become her at the dinner table; and the most diligent search could not produce a shred of clothing belonging to the girl.

In the days that followed, Martha's step lost something of its lightness, and her eyes became shifting and uneasy.

One morning a little later she was gone. No word, no intimation; simply gone.

Of course it was "ungrateful" for Martha to leave without "notice," but as Miss Nancy said, "If she had been as mean as some she would have stayed till she got the new clothes which were promised her, to replace those that were stolen."

Fifty miles from Dunville is Newtown, and here Martha plodded. There were months of discouragement for her and hard fighting for life; but Newtown was not yet grown large enough to be altogether heartless, and its inhabitants were mostly working people.

How she accomplished it the chronicles do not relate! but in a year she was the possessor of a little stock of millinery, and had patronage enough to pay her rent.

That the young minister should seek her company was not altogether surprising, for Martha had improved wonderfully. Her cheeks were like the ripe side of a peach, and her figure was lithe and pleasing.

It mattered little to her that the pale young theologian's head barely reached to her shoulder, or that a fall had for ever deprived him of a straight back. That he sought her was the thought that filled her hours.

I think she must have been very happy just then; at least she saw much of young Jackson, and if she found it hard to read the book of prayers which he gave her, the fact detracted nothing from her happiness in fondling it. Softer lights lived in her eyes, which sometimes did not close all night from happy thoughts.

One night the window in her little shop was broken, and a few cheap femininities therein displayed were stolen. The thief was speedily brought to justice, however; thanks to young Jackson.

When Martha was called to identify her goods she looked straight past the bedraggled finery into the face of the thief and refused to swear to ownership.

For a few weeks Martha's burglar hung about her shop and after a little her stock dwindled to nothing.

One night he went to young Jackson for money, and it was on that night that Martha disappeared from Newtown.

Jackson found under his door the next morning a scrawly note, signed "Martha," which merely said she wasn't an orphan and hoped that he would forgive her; there was a little money, too, inclosed in the note, which that young man promptly placed in the missionary box.

Only a few years have passed since then, but Martha's beauty is gone, and she idles all day in the Flanderses' hut—doing no more than she can help in the way of housekeeping and thinking of what might have been had her father not been Jim Flanders. E. T. WAITE.

The Battle of Manchester.

ALL the French and Germans in England at the present time secretly arm, and at a given signal travel from all parts of the country and concentrate in Lancashire and Yorkshire with a view to assisting the landing of troops from France and Germany. They destroy bridges, cut telegraph wires, and tear up railway lines, so that the north of England is practically isolated. Simultaneously with this concentration war is formally declared by France and Germany.

One Sunday evening the French advance on Gorton, which is defended by the 2nd Manchesters. A vivid word picture is drawn by Mr. Tracy of this fearful fight, and a magnificent illustration, showing the Manchester men in their trenches, has been drawn by Mr. Lawson Wood, and appears in this week's *Pearson's Weekly*.

Every man in Lancashire—in fact every man in the United Kingdom—should at least get this instalment of the serial. A concise summary will enable the reader to pick up the thread of the story at this point with ease.

TWO GOOD NOVELS.

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MARCELLE OF THE LATIN QUARTER. By CLIVE HOLLAND, Author of "Seed of the Poppy," "My Japanese Wife," &c. With Four Full-page Illustrations. Crown 8vo, cloth, 6s. Mr. Holland in his latest novel has gone to the Quartier Latin of Paris for his colouring.

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A DUEL IN THE AIR.

WHAT was their real name? Were they really brothers? How had it chanced that they arrived the same day and hour at the tent of Peter Longman, a brave Alsatian and genuine colossus, who moved from village to village his gaily-decorated baraque of trained lions, epic wrestlers, and two-hundred-pound women juggling with knives and cannon balls?

But, whatever the chance, it is nevertheless certain that one morning, on the grand square of the town of Chaumont, the brawny Alsatian, seated before his equipage, reflecting, perhaps, upon the vicissitudes of this world, meditations justified by the very meagre receipts of the previous evening's performance, saw suddenly two young men stop before him.

"What do you wish, my friends?" said he, with a none too polite intonation, for Peter Longman at the moment was not in his usual genial and good-humoured frame of mind.

"To engage with your troupe," responded they with equal brevity.

"But what can you do?"

"Anything you call for; in a word, everything."

"A pretty big claim, my boys, did you but know it," Longman returned doubtfully.

"A true one all the same. Let us prove it."

"*Bon!* You are strong, eh? Then go yonder where a cart loaded with stone fell in the ditch this morning and get it out of the way quick; it worries me."

"So be it."

And Dyk, with the word, glided under the vehicle, and with a single powerful heave of his sturdy loins lifted it from the rut and set it erect, whilst Dak, harnessing himself between the shafts, dragged it like a feather's weight to the side of the highway. Longman opened wide his astonished eyes, but continued the test.

"And agile?"

Scarcely had he put the question when the two young men, with a double somersault backward and a handspring forward, leaped clear over his head.

Longman was thunderstruck. Six feet three he stood in his buskins, and yet over his head they had gone with the agile lightness of flying birds.

"But what wages do you want?" demanded he when he had recovered his voice a little.

"Food and lodging. As for money—well, decide it for yourself."

The bargain was quickly struck. And, for a fact, with the coming of the two unknown, fortune returned to the Longman equipage. That night, and for two weeks longer, the tent was overflowing, and when, at the end of that time, Peter deemed that the hour had come to shift his quarters, the municipality itself took steps to retain him.

Nothing more graceful, robust, or finer to look at ha ever been seen in the town of Chaumont, or elsewhere than these two stalwart lads, who, balancing on the tight-rope, vaulting in the sawdust, or swinging from the bar of the flying trapeze, seemed to have but one body and a single will between them. Leaping, whirling, pirouetting in the air before an entranced and breathless crowd, then with incomparable grace and lightness dropping to their feet hand in hand, like Siamese twins by an invisible chain; no wonder, I say, the applause sounded like thunder, and, though seats and standing-room were already paid for, pieces of money and golden louis fell in a shower upon the sand of the arena.

Frequently, too, sweet and tender missives accompanied this yellow rain. But never a one of these dainty, scented *billet-doux* had had the honour of a broken seal or an open envelope.

One person only, appeared perfectly indifferent to the two handsome athletes and their perilous exercises and she the sweetest, prettiest, most delicate and delicious little darling it is possible to conceive of—Mdlle. Netta Longman, daughter of the proprietor; barely turned her sixteenth birthday, fresh and fair as a bit of porcelain, gay as a butterfly, and not unlike a butterfly, when, in skirts of many-coloured and bespangled tarletan, she swept the ring on a bareback steed and leaped, an "aerial sylph," the gilded hoops and moons of paper. Coquettish, smiling, already half a woman, and as dainty as a portrait by Greuze!

She had began from the first, in a spirit of mischief, to tease the two friends. Stranger than all else, though she teased and laughed at them continually, she kept them at a respectful distance, and cold and correct, as

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became the daughter of the patron of the establishment, she never allowed them to approach the slightest intimacy because of her light-hearted manner.

She was a child as yet, and did not see that when she gave her attention to Dyk and talked too long with him, Dak grew white and trembling, and that a wave of red mounted to Dyk's brow if she chanced to hold Dak, in her wild leaps to the swinging bar, a trifle closer than ordinary.

Meanwhile, Peter, her father, who was becoming a veritable Crœsus by reason of his new attractions, coveted with an ever-growing eagerness the continued services of his two pensionnaires, whose demands, strange to say, did not grow in proportion to the receipts brought in by them. The original tent had long since grown and enlarged into a genuine caravansary, with a troupe of forty or fifty assistants, and increased menagerie and force of waggons and horses, and was now a little kingdom ruled by Peter Longman, more and more astounded as weeks rolled on, that Dyk and Dak were so indifferent to a good fortune, the greater part of which was due to their own work.

He wished, pushed by the fear of their leaving him, to take them into partnership; but at the first overture in this direction he had been received so coldly that the desire to try it again had disappeared. Nevertheless he still thought of it and told himself that in all this coldness and indifference to everything there was something that was most unnatural.

What did it mean? One worked to make a position, and conduct like this was incomprehensible—two young men that apparently and deliberately turned their backs upon an offer such as this, and which, doubtless would never occur again.

Perhaps they contemplated starting a circus of their own. At this thought Peter's blood made but one bound. A circus of their own! *Eh bien!* no, he'd put a stop to that—yes, a stop to that, even if he must give them his daughter to do it.

For Peter, you see, had used his eyes to some purpose, and this thought flashed in his brain like an inspiration of genius. But in repeating his exclamation, the better to digest its purpose, he suddenly perceived that he was confronted with a double embarrassment. Them? Give them his daughter! But there were two of them! Which of the two should it be?

For his part he had no preference. Dyk was the more vigorous, Dak the more supple. Dyk was an incomparable dancer and balancer on the tight-rope and the iron wire, but for swinging and pirouetting on the swinging or the fixed bar, Dyk had never had an equal.

A great embarrassment, truly. My faith! yes; but to win a battle one must always risk something. He began by consulting his wife, who affirmed that neither Dyk nor Dak cared a rap for Netta. Then Netta herself, when consulted, began to laugh and to protest that she would marry both of them or she would marry neither one or the other.

Peter, badgered by these conflicting fires, at last took a decisive resolution. He went straight to the two brothers and explained to them his trouble and dilemma. He desired, he told them, to attach them to him by ties that nothing could break. He only wished that he had two daughters that he might call them both his sons-in-law, but as Providence had only done half it's work he must perforce content himself with doing the best he could.

A CATTLE RAID.

BOVRIL

AGAIN!

Extract from the *Lancet* of March 17th, 1900: After describing the conveyance of wounded from Spearman's Camp to Chieveley, a distance of 24 miles, the writer of the article says: "The end of the train of stretchers and waggons came into view. Hot BOVRIL and stimulants had already been prepared by the men of the Royal Army Medical Corps, great pots of the former resting in the kitchen."

The *Daily Graphic* of March 3rd, 1900, contains an interesting narrative by a surgeon of the Royal Army Medical Corps. The writer says: "Cases now began to pour down from the hill on stretchers, and I soon ran short of my little supply of bandages; but Major —— sent up what I sent back for, with a supply of BOVRIL and other comforts for the sick. Suddenly the Boers opened fire on us, and their bullets went into the fire, knocking the sticks about."

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"Which of you, then," he said, bluntly, "is willing to become the husband of my dear little Netta?"

Nothing at all of a physiognomist, and absorbed in his mission, the worthy Peter did not notice the anguish suddenly painted upon the visages of the two men.

He innocently repeated his question as if this choice were the easiest thing in the world to make.

Dyk and Dak exchanged a look.

"In fifteen days," said Dyk at last, "we will give you an answer."

"Exactly, in fifteen days, an answer," confirmed Dak, resolutely.

"Ah—h! I comprehend; after the balloon, you mean?" said Longman, cheerfully.

"After the balloon, yes," Dyk and Dak responded, briefly.

* * * * *

The fact is that never was a moment so badly chosen to disturb the two men with matrimonial pre-occupations. Call it chance, if you will, but it was just at this time that a well-known aeronaut had come to Peter and arranged with him for an extraordinary performance, in which, as it rose, his balloon would carry up with it a trapeze attachment, on which the two athletes Dyk and Dak would perform, as long as the eye could see them, their most difficult and perilous exercises.

It was very natural, therefore, in Peter's eyes, that they should wish to wait before giving a decision till the morning succeeding this grave but glorious adventure.

Were the two men, or the two brothers, perhaps, disturbed or uneasy in mind? No one knew, for no one had seen them, they, for several weeks past, having been visible only at the hour of the performance. They had shut themselves into a little court that had been placed at their disposal, and there, on a trapeze swung at first fifteen yards, then twenty, then thirty yards high, they had devoted all their time and skill to practising the wonderful feats with which soon they were to increase their glory, and fill to bursting the money-bags of their genial employer.

The day for the great performance arrived at last. On the square, round which the authorities had drawn a rope and a cordon of police to preserve the peace and the necessary space for the air-ship's ascent, the crowd pushed and swayed in numbers so great that one saw but a moving sea of heads and faces. In the middle of the roped-in space the balloon swayed and balanced gently.

Promptly as the clock struck three there was a stir in the crowd, and on a chariot dexterously driven by Netta herself, Dyk and Dak arrived, handsome as gods, but decidedly funereal in attire, in their ebony-hued tights, relieved about the loins with a girdle of silver.

With a gracious salute to the applauding multitude and a bow still more profound to their beautiful driver, they leaped to the basket, and the aeronaut, already in place, the lines were cast off, and they were off for the clouds.

There was a moment's hush, then a roar of renewed applause. The balloon, with the vigour of a swimmer who sends himself aloft by a stroke of the heel against the sandy bottom, leaped straight into the air. Then from the cradle, one saw lifting themselves two young and slender forms, obscured by the cordage as yet, but erect, a moment later in full sight upon the bar of the trapeze.

The two men, as I say, were erect on the car, their arms crossed before them, very pale, a simple undulatory motion of the hips alone serving to keep their balance.

Dyk spoke first.

"Dak," said he, "your secret is mine. You love Netta as I, too, love her. Is it not so?"

"It is so," Dak responded. "I love her."

"Are you willing to withdraw and leave it to me to become her husband?" Dak pursued, firmly.

"No; and you—are you willing to leave her to me?"

"A thousand times no!"

"Then?"

"It is fate that must decide between us!"

"The one left living, you mean, to have her for his own?"

"Exactly, the one left living; and, now, quick! on guard with your knife!"

On the breadth of the trapeze they had recoiled as they spoke to the supporting cords and there, hands on their knives, they regarded each other with deadliest hate, heedless alike of the wind that swept them to and fro, and of the grandeur of the scene that opened about them—beneath them the broad green earth, above them the deep blue heavens.

Then, suddenly they flung themselves together, ardent, panting, with fierce, sparkling eyes.

It was a deadly struggle.

With the free arm bent and used as a shield, they forced each other to reverse on the bar, which swayed with their weight. From below came up a deafening murmur, a stifled hurrah! The crowd was admiring the performance.

With rigid muscles they remained thus a moment motionless, one doubled across the other. Then Dyk, by a sudden movement forced the hold of Dak upon the cord and threw himself upon him, their bodies, even in that access of mad rage, continuing to preserve the instinct of equilibrium.

But only for an instant, however, did they thus remain. By a powerful effort Dak in turn forced Dyk to the bar and there, bending over him, with a short, fierce thrust, drove the knife deep into his comrade's throat. A moment later, and with a wild, mocking laugh he, too, was dead, the knife pierced through his own heart, his body flying through space, an inert mass.

And whilst far below there, on the roofs of the city, above the heads of the gaping multitude, lay the tattered remnant of one who had once been Dak, the corpse of Dyk, attached still to the trapeze by a last contracsky surmounted by the waving flags of the complaition of the stiffening muscles, rose into the blue sant aeronaut, happily unconscious of all that had been going on.

F. M. T.

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PEARSON'S New Morning Paper.

The Daily Express 1D. 2

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PEARSON'S New Morning Paper.

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THE PAPER FOR GOOD FICTION.

PEARSON'S New Morning Paper.

The Daily Express 1D. 2

THE PAPER FOR SOCIETY GOSSIP.

PEARSON'S New Morning Paper.

The Daily Express 1D. 2

THE PAPER FOR THE TEA TABLE.

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The Brain Gymnasium

In these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, Short Stories, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by Monday, April 30th, 1900.

No. 94.

The following sentences are anagrams of geographical names:

TEN HID IN A CANOE.
EACH IRON TRAM.
PLANT ONIONS, ETC.

No. 95.

What is the rendering of:

O
B E D

No. 96.

What words do these lines represent?

Quite firmly fixed by joiner's art,
Reverse it and we fall apart.

No. 97.

If asked to tell what is my FIRST,
I'd say, why, 'tis a weighty matter;
'Tis lifeless; lives; by some thought curst;
Vessel of earth; grows daily fatter.

My SECOND follows, as it should,
And is, in fact, a limitation;
Perchance attached to block of wood
It bears to FIRST a close relation.

My WHOLE an art-assisted growth,
And loved by Britain's lower classes;
'Tis succulent when cooked, and both
As foe or friend to Morpheus, passes.

No. 98.

A man, who was just five feet tall, found that his shadow was eight feet long; then, by careful measurement, it was ascertained that a pole threw a shadow just 181 feet in length; and we have the simple puzzle of telling the height of the pole from what we know about the man and the two shadows.

How high was the pole?

No. 99.

Form a word-square with words rhyming with:

"FLEET," "BEECH," "BREAKER," "GEM."

One of the diagonals must form a word rhyming with "CALM."

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Nos. 70 to 75.

The prize of £2 has been awarded to Mr. D. O'Neill, of 7 Stow Hill, Newport, Mon., whose solution was the first correct one dealt with.

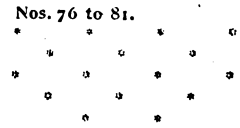
A copy of "The Lucky Bargee," by Harry Lander, has been sent to the following:

A. C. Day, 34 Bennett Road, Bournemouth, E.
Miss L. Banister, 7 Samuel Street, Crewe.
Miss K. Wilkinson, 1 Woodland Terrace, Plymouth.
A. Grant, Lowfields, Bracebridge, Lincoln.
Miss Cutler, Shirley Place, Shirley, Southampton.
Miss M. Connell, 27 Maidenhead Street, Hertford.
Miss Olive Marcus, 38 Dartmouth Row, Blackheath, S.E.
H. Frost, jun., 3 Fulbrook Road, Junction Road, N.
James Jones, 94A High Street, Swansea.
F. C. Bacot, 108 Sydenham Road North, Croydon.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES.

Nos. 76 to 81.

No. 76.



No. 77. "A rolling stone gathers no moss."

No. 78. "Britannia needs no bulwarks,
No towers along the steep;
Her march is o'er the mountain waves,
Her home is on the deep."
—Campbell ("Ye Mariners of England").

No. 79. HEED-LESS; HEAD-LESS.

No. 80. 11—1—7—2—10—3—8—4—12—5—9—6.

No. 81.
M I S S
I O T A
S T U N
S A N D O W N
O B O E
W O R E
N E E D

Result of the "Special Short Stories" Competition.

Our readers will remember that we set an anagram to be done by those competitors who sent in correct solutions in "Brain Gymnasium" Nos. 46 to 51.

We are now able to announce that the prize of £2 has been awarded to Mr. J. H. COCKERILL, 17 Essex Street, Kingsland Road, London, N.

All those who chose the 5d. in preference to entering for the anagram, have had the money sent them; but several gave their portion to the F.A.F., for which, on behalf of the little ones, we tender our thanks.

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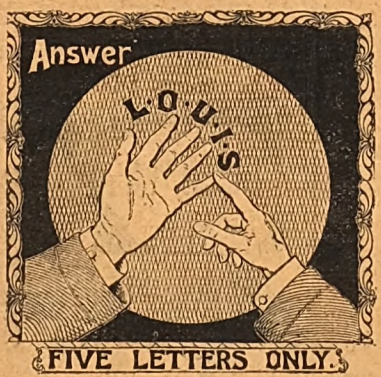

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SHORT STORIES

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN

No. 591. FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 28TH, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

Nervousness and Depression.

A person whose Digestion is weak becomes Dyspeptic, Nervous, and generally run-down. The reason is that ill-digestion means that the Body is ill-nourished, and suffers from what is known as mal-nutrition—the Nerves in particular.

That is why so many people—especially Women—are depressed, morbid, melancholy, irritable, and suffer so terribly from prolonged or intermittent Nervous attacks, facial agonies, Neuralgia, &c.

Those who have weak Digestion have urgent need of Guy's Tonic. Those who are Nervous and subject to Nerve Pains, Headache, Backache, Facial Attacks, also need Guy's Tonic. This Remedy first brings about Good Appetite and Perfect Digestion, and thus promotes enjoyment of Food, preventing the appearance of unpleasant Symptoms after meals.

Guy's Tonic, then, exerts a Constitutional tonic power, which is restorative of waning Nerve Strength by its stimulative action upon the Assimilative tissues of the Body, whose office is to create Nourishment for the Nerves out of the Food you eat and should digest.

Declining Energy, waning Strength, loss of Nerve power, and a debilitated Digestion are thus all corrected by the use of Guy's Tonic, and a new lease of life seems as it were to be attained, to give the patient healthy activity, natural enjoyment, and physical vigour.

Mr. W. Campbell Muir, of Inistrynich, Dalmally, N.B., writes:

"For four months I was suffering from Nausea, Flatu-"lence, and Depression. Occasionally three days would "pass without my having eaten solid Food. I tried "various remedies, which did good for a day or two, but "the effects were not permanent. I thought at last I "would try Guy's Tonic, and with great pleasure I have "to inform you that I had only taken half a bottle before "my appetite returned, the Flatulence disappeared, and "I am now as well as ever."

Mrs. Manning, of 89 Roseleigh Street, Cliftonville, Belfast, writes on February 6th, 1900:

"My Husband and I have taken Guy's Tonic occa-"sionally for some years, and have found it very Bene-"ficial and Satisfactory for General Debility of the "System and Sluggish Liver."

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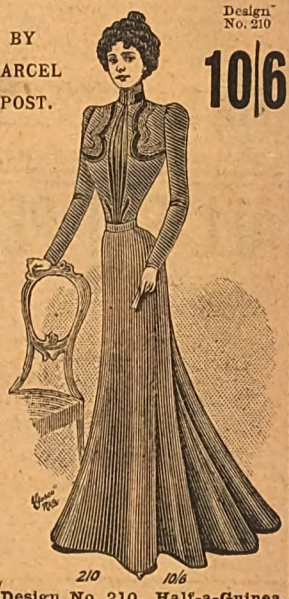

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281 10/6

Design No. 281. 10/6. This is quite an up-to-date design. It has a short coat pointed in front and setting close at back; velvet collar. The Skirt is cut in the latest approved style. Made in **Specialite Serge** and in the smooth-faced **Venetian Cloth** in all colours. Costume complete, 10/6; carriage paid 6d. extra. **Marvellous value!** The Coat can be lined through for 3/6 extra, and the Skirt lined linenette for 2/6 extra. The Coat and Skirt makes up splendidly in Allen Foster & Co.'s new **Melton Coating**, price 17/6. (Patterns Free.)

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Design No. 210. Half-a-Guinea. Allen Foster & Co. call special attention to this costume. The style is most attractive and extremely ladylike, and represent the **best value** in costumes obtainable for **Half-a-Guinea.** It is made in the two excellent cloths, the Specialite Serge and Venetian Cloth, **all colours.** There is lining in bodice and sleeves. It has a full pleated front and is trimmed with good velveteen and beaded gimp on bodice and collar. The Skirt is well-made and finished. **A Great Bargain** for **10/6**, carriage paid 6d. extra. Skirt alone, 5/6; carriage paid 5d. extra.

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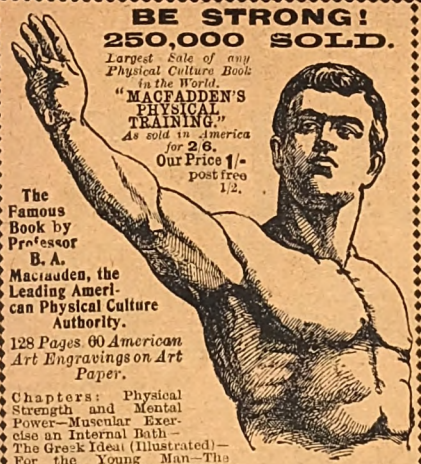

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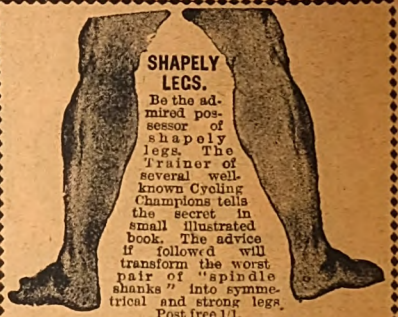

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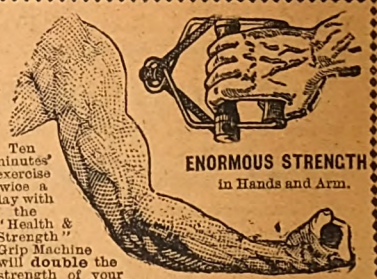

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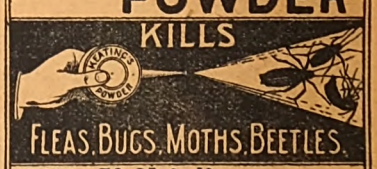

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Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

SHORT STORIES

No 591.] [One Penny.

For the Week Ending April 28th, 1900.

Hunted to the Death.

The western sky, at sunset, looked like a dark red pool of blood that had flowed down the sides of the cloud mountains, and collected in the hollow between their steeps. The abruptness of the vaporous pinnacles and ravines seemed but a repetition of the deeply graven face of the region which lay round me.

In the rough face of a connecting parapet there was a natural entrance, of sufficient height to admit a man walking erect. Passing through this doorway, I found myself in a passage turning first one way and then the other; dark at first, it presently became lighter, and finally, opened into an enclosed space—a chamber wide and high, upon the floor of which flamed and flickered the logs of a hunter's fire, sending upward through some crevice in the roof above a thin spiral of smoke.

Beside the fire and bending over the blaze, crouched a figure, which in that weird light resembled one of those gnomes by whose hands this castle in the wilderness might have been erected.

The smoothness of the entrance-passage, and the soundless tread of my moccasined feet, had brought me into this presence without warning, and only that nameless sensation which causes the propinquity of one human being to be felt by another, impelled the figure to lift its head and say:

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"What yo' do here? Eh?"

I cannot affirm that it was by the exercise of tact that I succeeded in allaying the suspicions and finally in winning the friendship of this singular being—for, oddly though we were thrown together, we became in time the best of friends. Tact is scarcely a feature of my character; and I am persuaded that no amount of that quality would conquer the reserve of so strange a man. He perceived that I, like himself, was in harmony with the world of nature, and that sufficed. And, having drifted thither, it came to pass that there I remained with "Old Raven" as my sole companion.

He was past middle life, and therefore more wedded to the superstitions of his race than a younger man of his tribe would have been. He belonged to that peculiar people whose home is on the heights above the torrid sands which drink up the waters of "the loud-singing Gila." A hermit by nature he was always offering up propitiatory sacrifices to some Indian deity, for reasons which, for a time, I did not comprehend.

He selected the choicest portions of his game—for he was a hunter—and having carried them to the summits of the high towers before mentioned, he there consumed them with fire.

His only weapon was his flat bow of buffalo-rib, whipped with raw sinew; but by his inimitable patience in stalking he generally contrived to get within range of his quarry.

His aspect was most striking. He was not of unusual height, but his shoulders were huge, his arms long; and the coppery skin was drawn so tightly over his gaunt loins as to reveal every movement of bone and muscle underneath. His features were strong and grim in expression, and there was a depth in the setting of the eyes such as is seldom seen in a savage man. His head, arms, and muscular torso were naked; and coiled among the shock of black hair lay the scalp-lock closely braided and tied with deer-sinew.

One day he called my attention to a number of rough-healed scars upon his breast and sides, and said in reference to them, that a certain desperate man of his own tribe had persecuted him for many years, actuated by some vital hatred, and tried unavailingly to goad him to combat. Finally, all other means failing, he waylaid and murdered a nephew of "Old Raven" of whom the latter was especially fond and proud.

It would be useless to attempt to render the force of the old Indian's manner in telling this story—the sullen fits of musing and muttering, broken by storms of passion. "Den me kill 'um. We fight long—all strip—all blood. Las' me take 'um back down—drive knife in here."

He drew a deep breath and his frame seemed to dilate. The wide chest heaved with passion.

"See, him knife me here. But 'Ole Raben,' him strong, like buffalo. Knife no hurt 'um—laugh—heap—so."

And the terrible old man gave utterance to an appalling chuckle. In consequence of this deed, he went on to say, he had fled from his tribe and lived an outcast. And now followed the dark secret of his present life. In a deep, guttural undertone he told me that he had been pursued in his flight, though not by any human avenger.

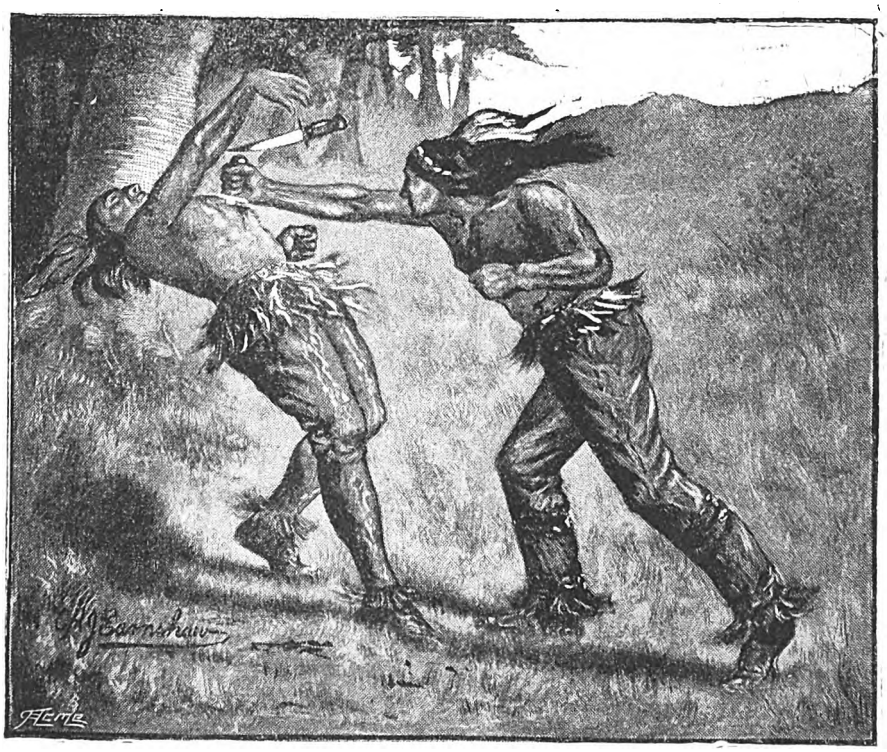
Everywhere an enormous grizzly bear dogged his footsteps; and in this monster—so his superstitious belief assured him—the spirit of the dead Indian whose name was "Big Thunder" had taken up his abode.

"Me know 'um, know 'um sure. Him big—hump all white, an' right on bre's' long red mark. Him point 'um foot, show me, an' grin. Den me know 'um—Big Thunder."

After a gloomy pause he added:

"Me never know when come. Jus' like steal-man. Sometime night, sometime day—but alway come, show me big red mark, an' grin an' go way. Some day me kill 'um too. Den me res' heap."

During my explorations of this wild land, I chanced one day upon a region of a different character from that which we inhabited. It was well watered and wooded, and I was lured onward until I



"Den me kill 'um We f ght long—all strip—all blood."

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found its central well-spring. Deep between rocky hills it lay, the only approach to it being through the long gorge by which I had come. The descent from the level of the upper plain was steep, and the rocky sides of the downward path offered a marked contrast to the verdure of the valley below. For at the end of the gorge the rocky walls suddenly diverged, and opened to my view a lovely oasis, in the midst of which was the spring itself, clear and cold, with water cresses about its margin, and the blue of the sky mirrored within.

A lovely spot where to linger and dream. The trill of the little stream, murmuring on its way down the glen, was the only sound audible. After quenching my thirst I paused a moment to admire the rough carnelian and jasper pebbles which surrounded the margin.

And then I saw something which had hitherto escaped my notice. Two long impressions, almost in shape like human footprints, except that certain sharp, deep indentations marked their extremities, had displaced the soil. With a sudden thrill of the nerves I glanced quickly up.

No sign of life met my gaze. But in a moment there came a sound from the direction of the gorge—a noise as of running; and immediately after a great mule-deer leaped from the rocky entrance.

Two long impressions had displaced the soil.

He stopped, swaying upon his limbs, and gazed an instant, a worried look in his eyes, his head scarcely upbearing his branching horns. He threw a frightened glance over his shoulder, for down the pass came a whining note and rustling footsteps like the moving of dead leaves upon the snow. Gathering, the buck sprang forward again; and now I saw an arrow sticking in his shoulder; it was driven to the feather and worked as he ran.

"Poor fellow," thought I; "truly you are hunted to the death; but those ravening coyotes shall never drag you down."

A keen glance along the barrel, a darting flame—and prone he staggered and fell, almost beside the spring. The lean, grey crew of pursuers, crowding out from the pass, stopped at the crack of my rifle to look and listen; they lifted their heads, and with ears, eyes, and noses strove for the sight and scent; then, down drooping again, slunk with lowered tails afar, and skirting the edge of the valley, were soon lost in the thorny mazes of the chapparal.

But once more, from out of the deep cañon came another and more awful note. Some great body was pushing its way down, in an awkward and lumbering gallop, while smothered snorts and vengeful gruntings told of collisions against the jagged sides of the narrow way; and laboured breathing reached my ears, as if the creature had run long and hard. Not the wolves alone were following the trail of the wounded buck.

Fearing to rise erect, I succeeded by rolling over and over across an intervening stretch of turf, in gaining a place of concealment in the thick chapparal.

There I waited, but not for long. I already knew what was to come; and in another instant the open door of the gulch gave egress to a grizzly bear of unprecedented size and strange marking. Out he came, headlong, and without a moment's pause, lunged straight forward on the trail of the deer.

On reaching the carcase he halted with a snort, and rearing upward on his haunches, gave utterance to a loud "hough," followed by a hoarse and heavy muttering.

As he stood so, beating the air with his great paws, sharp-set with talons, there seemed to be in his action something almost human. He turned his great head in all directions, protruding his long, straight upper lip beyond his broad nose, in the effort to unravel the mystery.

His small, piggish eyes gleamed and rolled in their red setting; a hideous grin bared his teeth, and I could almost fancy that he was about to speak. The wind, fortunately, blew directly from him to me and I could plainly perceive the peculiar half-human odour which he gave forth.

Failing to discover my presence, he turned his attention to the deer, and moved about it with a semblence of grotesque and horrible dancing, as if in gloating anticipation of the coming feast. At length he dropped on all fours, grasped the carcase by the fore-shoulder and, lifting it with ease, made off down the glen.

I had been lying all this while in a painfully cramped position and now to relieve myself I incautiously moved one arm. At the sound the monster dropped his prey and came back at a gallop. Within twenty paces of my retreat he reared himself up once more. He grinned hideously; his ears were flattened close to his skull, while his square muzzle fairly wrinkled and twitched with rage. As he stood

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there I judged his height to be fully seven feet. His immense bulk, clothed in grey, was marked by a high hump of startling whiteness; and—awful sight!—there, between his forelegs upon his hairy breast I beheld the self-same sign of which Old Raven had told me—a long dull splash of red.

How or when I got back to our camp in the rocky castle, I hardly know; I was sound in body and limb, but woefully disturbed in spirit. Nor was Old Raven in a mood to cheer me, on the contrary he was in a particularly bad humour. He had, it appeared, stalked and wounded a buck; but the animal, just as he shot, had started at something and jumped back; the arrow had struck in the shoulder and the deer got away.

"May be me fin' 'um mornin'," he added as he rolled himself in his buffalo robe and composed himself to sleep.

But the grizzly had so impressed me that I no longer wondered at Old Raven's strange notion concerning it, and next morning I exerted all my powers of persuasion to prevent him from following the trail. When I remembered how close the monster had been to me, and imagined the probable results of an encounter between it and the Indian, I confess to a nervous tremor that I could not control. I could not deny that a spell, real or imaginary, seemed to attend the presence of the animal. Old Raven, though he could have had no suspicion of my adventure, manifested an unwonted restlessness. Did he divine the neighbourhood of that creature?

A few days later, while in pursuit of antelope, we met with an experience which had the effect of strengthening the superstitious feeling that had already begun to find lodgment in my mind.

Within twenty paces of my retreat he reared himself up once more.

In the effort to get within reach of the "children of the plains" we had traversed long stretches of alkali and sand. The herd which we followed sauntered aimlessly about, cropping at intervals some withered herbage or cactus which sparsely clothed the more fertile portions of the plain, and guarded jealously by the ever alert buck. A near approach on our part seemed impossible; as often as we gained what we anticipated would be vantage ground, we would find that the herd had moved a corresponding distance, maintaining the usual number of yards between themselves and us. Finally Old Raven said:

"Me go 'um rock—no furder."

The rock to which he pointed resembled at the first glance, part of a range of fallen edifices of stone, massed abruptly on the plain where the shy animals were grazing. But the antelope, so far from regarding the great pile with misgiving, seemed to be designedly drawing nearer to it. At length we saw them march in single file along the narrow wall which skirted the base of the cliff, led by the guardian buck, whose white rump, even as we looked, disappeared behind a boulder, followed in regular procession by the entire herd.

When the last one had vanished the old Indian, with the stealthy action of his race, glided on before from point to point, behind stone and bush, creeping onward, his broad back undulating like some huge saurian, over and among the scattered masses that diversified the way. Finally, having reached a point from which it seemed probable that the game might be killed, he rested. Meanwhile, I had imitated his tactics and joined him where he lay.

Slowly and cautiously the stalker lifted his dark

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head above the wall. For an instant he remained at gaze; then turned a blank look towards me and exclaimed in a low guttural tone:

"Antelope—no see!"

It was true; not a "goat" was in sight. Where had they gone—or flown? We stood up and looked abroad, where the wide plain stretched away below us, for we had slowly ascended since the beginning of our stalk.

Then we made our way to a higher and drier cleft. At this point there was an aperture in the wall, working in another direction. Old Raven glanced through it and then motioned me to do the same. It was a strange spectacle that I beheld.

I looked down into an open space surrounded on all sides by rock, at some points rising sheer, at others ascending and receding in terraces. The floor, nearly circular in shape, and traversed by long fissures, was crowded with the entire trembling band of antelope. Down from their bodies dripped the raindrops as they moved and shifted their positions. They were not more than fifty yards away from us.

Slowly and cautiously the stalker lifted his dark head above the wall.

A gleam of satisfaction lightened my companion's visage; gently he drew his bow, fitting an arrow to the string.

But before he could loose it a sudden panic fell upon the herd. They began to run in circles, confusedly, crowding closer together, and turning their wild eyes in terror towards the entrance of their harbour of refuge. Following the direction of their gaze, Old Raven emitted a gasp, his bow fell from his hand, and the barbed hunting shaft rattled harmlessly among the stones. In a husky voice he muttered:

"Ugh, him here, look, see. Big Thunder."

Yes, there, blocking the entrance with his immense body, stood the terrible grizzly. It was the same monster that I had already seen; there could be no room for mistake. No other had a shape so massive; none other the white hump; and none other—for, as we looked, he reared himself up, grinning and seeming to point to it with his paw—none other bore upon his breast that wide splash of red. It was Big Thunder indeed.

With a yell of defiance, Old Raven drew ready his knife, snatched up his bow and went leaping down the rocks towards the awful apparition. I followed him as rapidly as I might. But when we reached the spot where the bear had stood, not a living creature was in sight.

At sunset on the last evening of our stay we had kindled a fire, but by degrees it had burnt down leaving us in darkness.

I fell asleep and did not awaken until the moon had risen and thrown its light through an opening in the rocky roof, directly on the bed of Old Raven. My eyes rested upon it idly for a moment; then all at once I realized that it was empty.

I got up and crossed the floor. The Indian was nowhere to be seen, though the bed was still warm where he had lain. Desiring some explanation of his disappearance, I threaded the stone corridor, and emerged into the outer air.

A sound proceeding from above, caused me to look upward, and I discovered a figure on one of the tower summits. Its attitude was of supplication; it stood with arms outstretched, facing the moon. The head was slowly bowed and lifted again, and a low chanting came faintly to my ears. It was a sound filled with grief; it seemed to mingle with the pale moonlight, and then to pass into shadow and lose itself over the dreary plain. The distance was too great for me to discern Old Raven's features, but I knew it must be he.

I wandered back to my bed again, and slept till the yellow light of day awakened me. My first glance was towards the Indian's bed. It was still empty. I was the only living being in the cavern. I rose, and after hastily swallowing a few mouthfuls of food, I took my rifle and set out to search for him. I was inclined to think that he had left the neighbourhood; and I was impressed with the idea that he was in some danger.

Although there was nothing to guide me as to the direction I should take, chance or destiny led my steps straight to the rocky pass where the mule-deer had fallen.

I reached it in due time, and passing down between its high walls, stopped ever and anon to listen. I heard at length something that made my heart beat quicker, stirred my expectant nerves, and hastened my lingering footsteps. I hurried anxiously forward, and gained at last the open space of the fairy glade. Again that low murmur came to my ears. At first I could not determine whence it proceeded. But a few more steps brought me within sight of what I had dreaded. Partly

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hidden by the low bushes near the spring lay Old Raven sorely wounded.

He raised himself painfully upon his hands at my approach, turning upon me as he did so his ghastly countenance, lacerated and wet with blood. His half dead eyes, glowing still with sullen fire strove to fix their wavering gaze. He had been pouring water over his brow; and the little rill that sang its soft music off among the reeds, flowed with crimson streaks below him.

I knelt by his side, and stooping, partly raised him. But his limbs were numb and essayed in vain to support the dying frame. Raising one heavy arm he pointed down the glade, and muttered some indistinguishable words. Divining his wish I left him and ran to the spot indicated. It was as I expected. There writhed the great bear in his last struggle, the keen knife of his mortal foe standing straight up above his loins. The torrent of blood had soaked the grizzly's hide, matting the long hair upon his flanks and smearing the hideous face where he had sought with busy muzzle to staunch the fatal wounds.

Feebly he waved the knife above his head.

When he saw me he growled venomous impotency, and strove again and again to gain his feet. For a moment he actually succeeded in doing so, but immediately, all his forces ebbing, he swayed, staggered, and vomited a great gush of blood. He gave his huge head a last shake as of baffled rage. He trembled, reared himself half erect, toppled, and then lunged forward with a long slide upon the earth—dead.

I returned to the Indian, and taking him into my arms, carried him to the side of his now lifeless enemy. He stretched forth his hand, plucked out the knife from the carcase, and, as a last mark of defiance, essayed to slash the monster's head.

"Ole Raben kill yo', las'," he said slowly. "Big Thunder yo' track him no more."

Feebly he waved the bloody knife above his head. A fierce smile kindled upon his features and the death-song began. At times his voice almost failed; but the grim, brave heart roused again and the chant sounded forth once more. At the end he took my hand, pressed it to his forehead, fell back, straightened his limbs with a quiver, and was gone.

* * *

The passing wind which swept over the lonely place, took upon its wings the strong soul of Old Raven, and bore it far from the secret glade where he had met and slain the monstrous shape that harboured the spirit of his foe. There was death in the midst of life. The sweet, wild breeze, the grasses under foot, the birds above, seemed hasteuing to conceal the traces of the fray on the surface of fair nature's breast.

Edward Kerneys.

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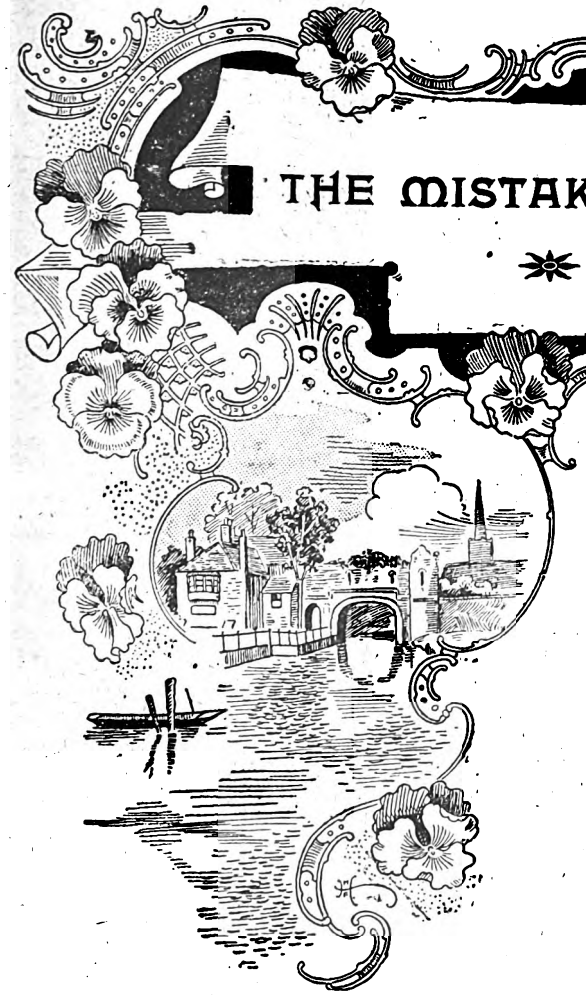
THE MISTAKE OF THE DOCTOR.



EXTRACT from the *Cheshire Chronicle*, December 2nd 1899.

WE regret to have to announce the death of Dr. Edward Tressellian, F. R. S., who died at Orpinham Hall, on the 30th ultimo, of consumption after a tedious and trying illness. The deceased gentleman who will long be remembered in the medical world by his brilliant work on Biology which gained him the coveted distinction of the Fellowship of the Royal Society, was one of the most promising of our rising scientists. Even amidst the toilsome and arduous duties of a country practitioner he found time to lay the foundation of his *Magnum Opus* which he had the satisfaction of completing during the last few months of his life., etc., etc.

The house was silent with the utter peacefulness of night and to Edward Tressellian poring over his microscope the hours seemed but as minutes. Condemned by fate to earn his livelihood as a country practitioner, his keen analytical mind revelled in the opportunities that the night gave him of pursuing his experiments in original research. Already the end was in sight, and in imagination he saw the "trivial round, the common task" laid aside and a magnificent career, of usefulness opening out before him. He saw the patient waiting of his wife rewarded by the unlimited companionship that freedom from the drudgery of practice would enable them to enjoy and he bent with renewed zest over his work.

Br-r-r-r rang out the imperative summons of his night-bell and with a sigh for his interrupted experiment, he went to the front door.

"I'm very sorry to disturb you at this time of night Doctor," said a woman's voice from the darkness, "but Mrs. Heale, of Court Street forgot to send for the medicine this evening and her boy is very fretty and bad. Would you mind giving him some medicine?"

"Certainly," the doctor cheerily replied. "It's lucky I hadn't gone to bed—come inside and sit down."

"Poor lad," he muttered, as he lit the gas in his surgery, "it'll be a happy release for him when he dies—only ten years old and to suffer as he does is terrible; somehow I don't feel comfortable giving him these huge doses of morphia, but anyway it's the only thing that does him any good. I wonder she didn't send the phial—she generally does." So saying he filled the tiny bottle with the morphia solution—wrapped it up methodically and took it to the messenger.

"Tell Mrs. Heale to be sure and not let anyone else take it," he said, giving the woman the package.

"Very well, sir, I'm exceedingly obliged to you," she replied, and Tressellian walked back to his room and glanced at the clock:

"By George—it's two o'clock! 'pon my soul I get so absorbed that I forget the poor little woman upstairs." With loving hands he replaced his instruments in their drawers and went softly up to bed, finding to his great relief that his wife, tired out, was fast asleep. He lay for some time 'twixt sleep and waking whilst his brain, over excited by his work, began reviewing the visits that he had paid on the previous day. Then his child moaned in its sleep and still half-unconscious he remembered a remark passed by one of his patients;

"Why, doctor, my boy until yesterday looked as healthy as yours."

Surely, he thought, that must have been a Mrs. Heale in Court Street who made that remark—a fresh patient, albeit a poor one. Then in an instant he woke with an awful feeling of dread stealing over him. Until yesterday there had been only one "Heale" on his list, and that one whom he had seen dozens of times, but now surely there were two and that second one a baby.

He could tell at once if he had made a fatal mistake or not by going down and seeing if the child's medicine, made up the previous day, had been sent for.

With the cold sweat standing on him, he crept from

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bed and stole down the stairs, which creaked ominously, and stood shivering in the surgery. Unwilling to have his fears confirmed he refrained from lighting a match but felt on the shelf. His hand closed like a vice on a tiny package, and he knew that he had unwittingly and perhaps pardonably killed another man's child. For a few minutes he sat in his night clothes, clutching the innocent cause of his undoing, seeing nothing in front of him but disgrace and ruin.

Then, in his distress he remembered his wife and knowing full well that prompt action, with such a poisonous dose, would be of no service he slowly went to his bedroom and laid his head on his wife's shoulder.

"Eh—Ned—haven't you been to bed—you'll break down you know, if you work too hard," she sleepily remarked, but then seeing from his face that something serious was amiss, "is the child all right?"

"Yes our child is quite well, thank God," he fervently replied.

"Come, Ned, what is the matter—you look as if" looking fearfully around, "you had seen a ghost."

"I have—you remember that poor lad in Court Street?"

"Dick Heale—rather—why I've filled up his little bottle lots of times when you've been out and Mrs. Heale has asked me to."

"Well—did you know that there is another family of that name three doors up—I was called in yesterday to see their baby, and they omitted to send for the medicine until just before I came to bed. They asked for Heale's medicine and—" he hesitated.

"My poor darling," she tenderly said, "you have given the baby poison then. Oh! I'm so sorry for you and the poor mother, cannot you do anything for it. Don't waste any more time, but hurry and" she whispered, "I'll say my prayers for you all."

Hastily slipping on his clothes and kissing his wife, Tressellian with everything that science could suggest, went sadly down the village street. The dawn was breaking, the birds were beginning to twitter, and an indescribable freshness was in the air, but he noticed none of these things—only the terrible sorrow for the life thus cut short seemed to overwhelm him. He stood finally outside the cottage which seemed perfectly quiet, and a fervent hope filled his breast that perhaps after all the fatal draught might not have been given. A cowardly desire surged through his mind to go back home and wait until morning but conquering it by an effort of will he knocked at the door again and again. At length a light appeared in the bedroom and the window was opened.

"Who's there?" shouted a man's voice.

"It's the doctor—come down, for I want to speak to you about the child," said the unfortunate man. With ears straining to catch every sound, he heard a woman's voice, and then a long loud scream followed by a piteous wailing. Then he heard footsteps descending the stairs and in another minute the bolts were drawn and the door opened.

"Oh, Doctor, the Missus fears the child is dead, and she's taking on turble bad—go up at once."

With his face pale as death Tressellian went up the stairs to his fate, and the sight he beheld struck terror to his breast. Clad in her nightdress with the child on her knees the woman was rocking to and fro in her sorrow, but at once, on seeing him enter she sprang into energy and passion. Then with her hard face convulsed with grief she faced him like a fury.

"Doctor—Doctor—what have you done to my child. I gave him a dose of your medicine directly Mrs. Jones brought it, and he went off to sleep at once. Somehow I had my suspicions of it, but I trusted you. Oh! what shall I do—what shall I do!"

With practised hand Tressellian assured himself that the child was really dead, and reverently laid it down in its bed. Seeing his face, the mother's fury blazed out afresh.

"And you call yourself a doctor! Why, you've murdered my child instead of curing him, and he my only one. Shame on you to be so careless—would to God I had never seen you." She burst into a passionate flood of tears whilst the doctor stood silent.

"Have you nothing to say for yourself, Man! Surely you didn't do it on purpose," she at length bitterly asked.

"My poor woman, God only knows I am innocent of any wrong-doing in this matter; your child had Dick Heale's medicine, which by an excusable mistake I gave your friend in the night. Consolation I cannot offer you, but it may interest you to know I would give my right hand to undo this."

He spoke wearily and without heat, but the mother was not appeased.

"I don't care," she sullenly replied. "You've killed my child, and I'll ruin you for it. I'll see that you kill no other babies in this town; you set up for being a clever man and—there get out of my sight or I shall go mad."

With head bowed the doctor left the room and went down the rickety stairs.

"I'm main sorry for you, Doctor, but it's the Missis' only child, and it ain't in reason for her not to take on—is it?" said the labourer in a low voice as he let him out.

With slow and faltering steps Tressellian returned to his house and sought what comfort he could get with a loving woman's arms around him.

* * * * *

The inquest proved as he had suspected a deadly blow to his practice, whilst Catherine Heale carried out her threat with all the venom that embittered hate could suggest. One by one his friends found it convenient to be out when he called, whilst the inhabitants of the village studiously ignored his salute and made him writhe with impotent fury.

He noticed his rival visiting houses, where hitherto he had been the trusted adviser, and he felt the bitterness of failure was on him.

His pride would not allow him to give way, and day after day his cob would be brought to the door and he would start on a round, well knowing that everyone knew his journeys to be a sham.

His wife with the staunchness of a good woman stood loyally by her husband, and quarrelled with all her friends for his sake. Night after night Tressellian sat in his study idle and silent and wondering what he could do for the best; for with his practice, his only capital, ruin could be but a matter of time.

One day he asked to see the banker's book which his wife kept, and closely examined it, and there found an entry of sixty pounds for which he could not account. Leaning over him his wife laid her hand on his head.

"Don't bother, darling—I felt we didn't want all those rings and things and so—I just sold them—When we get rich you can buy them back—"

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That night the doctor carefully reviewed his position, and with a shudder came to the conclusion that he was the "one too many." His wife's relations, wealthy people, would help her if he were gone and so it came to a question of methods. To leave a heritage of shame to his boy was not to be thought of for a moment, so he took a hypoderm ic syringe and in ected into his system enough tuberculous matter to produce, as he judged, a rapid consumption. Then with a mind at rest he faced the future with less of pain than he had for some weeks, and even with some return of his old spirits.

A week later he came down to breakfast, a meal now undisturbed by the visits of anxious patients, and found a blue letter on his plate. With a shudder he tossed it to his wife:

"Don't read it me if it is disagreeable, dear! I have got quite enough on my mind as it is," he said cursing himself the while for his cowardice.

The woman broke the seal and read it and then her eyes filled with tears, and she rose and went and tenderly kissed t e despondent man.

"Read that you silly boy," she said with a tremble in her sweet voice.

7, Lincoln's Inn,
22—2—'98.

My Dear Sir,—I have great pleasure in informing you that you are the residuary legatee to the late Colonel Claughton of Orpinham Hall, Cheshire. Owing to our not having drawn the will, we were unaware of the terms of it, and hence could not let you know of his death. I must congratulate you on your succession to a fine property, and hope that we, etc., etc.

Hawke and Jones.

He laid the letter down and was about to speak when a servant entered the room.

"Please, sir, George wants to know what horse you will ride this morning."

As if by common thought, both Tressellian and his wife rose from the table and left the room, and went into the stable-yard arm in arm.

"Good morning, ma'am, good morning, sir," said the groom, his face brightening as he noticed the blithe look of his master and mistress. "What orders to-day?"

"Well, George," said his master, "I shall ride no more here."

"Good Lord, sir—don't ee say so—the folks are main ashamed of themselves for treating you as they have. The old folk say that they never had such friends as you and Missis afore, and, damn 'em—asking your pardon, mum—they don't deserve to. Why, Lor' bless ee, sir, they'll be round a-giving of you a friendly dinner, soon, just to make it up. Don't you go, sir, you'll get all the people back again."

"Many thanks, George—I believe you, for you have been a trusty friend these eight years. No! I'm not going because I'm driven away, but the truth is I have succeeded to an estate up North, and want you to look after us all up there. Will you come?"

The faithful fellow looked hard at them both and then turned and entered the stable, where, with sundry smacks on his horses flanks and sulty language, he relieved his over-charged feelings.

And it was in this wise that Edward Tresellian left Newton Pynes.

F. Engelbach.

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BY FAR AND AWAY

The best magazine in existence is ***Pearson's Magazine***, published on May 1st. Crammed with stories and articles from the pens of the greatest authors, illustrated by the first artists and the finest photographers, ***Pearson's*** is without a rival.

All lovers of Nature should read "Natural History Photography," by the well-known naturalist, Mr. Richard Kearton, F.Z.S., who describes how birds may be photographed on their nests, although hidden away in sea-cliffs, or balanced at the tops of high trees.

"Feeding the Fighting Man" is an interesting article describing how Tommy Atkins is fed at the front, with a minute description of his daily bill of fare. "The Moon at Thirty-six Miles" gives an account of a wonderful telescope that will magnify the moon so greatly that it will appear as though only thirty-six miles distant. "Lion Hunting by a Lady" is a paper by an intrepid sportswoman, who has shot more lions in Africa than any other white woman.

Other articles, too numerous to mention, and half-a-dozen complete short stories, make ***Pearson's*** for May an ideal magazine.

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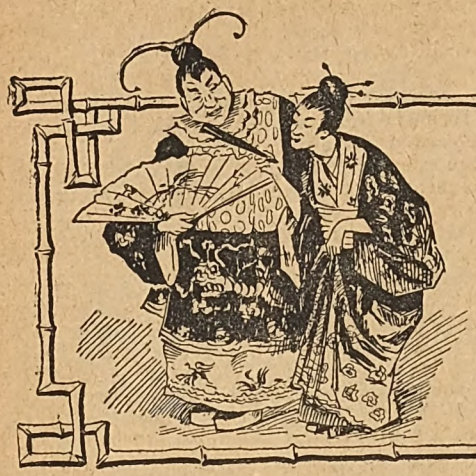

Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

3.—HE WHITEWASHES THE CELLAR, AND THE USUAL CALAMITY HAPPENS.

THERE was nothing in Mr. Bowser's demeanour during dinner to lead Mrs. Bowser to suspect that he had any particular scheme on hand for the evening, but scarcely had they got seated after the meal when he cleared his throat and gravely observed:

"Mrs. Bowser, how many times do you suppose we have faced death within the last six months?"

"Why, what on earth do you mean!" she exclaimed in alarm.

"I mean that we have been preserved about forty times over, and that miracles have been wrought in our favour. We are alive when we ought to have been dead. Every day and hour for the last half year we have stood face to face with the grim monster."

"I—I can't believe it!" she gasped.

"Perhaps not—not even when your husband says it, but it is the truth nevertheless. We have been in danger of typhoid fever, spinal miningitis, consumption, paralysis and a dozen other fatal diseases, and all through our own carelessness. I can hardly conceive how we have escaped."

"But what is it—why don't you tell me?"

"When was our cellar whitewashed last?" he asked in a voice hardly above a whisper.

"Why, about a year ago, I should think."

"Our cellar was whitewashed for sanitary reasons. The idea was to kill germs and microbes. After six months whitewash loses its strength and germs and microbes will frisk over it and actually feed upon it. For six months, then we have had no protection from the shafts of the fell destroyer. The malignant germs and microbes——"

"I'll get a man in to-morrow," she interrupted, "though I don't think there is any danger. There are thousands of cellars which are never whitewashed."

"There will be no need to call in the services of a man, Mrs. Bowser. I don't propose to pay a man fifteen shillings to come here and skim over the walls in an hour."

"But you—you don't mean that you will do it yourself?"

"That's exactly what I mean. I have a pail of whitewash and a brush at the back door. It will not only be healthful exercise, but inhaling the smell will do me good. I don't propose to leave a thousand microbes behind in some corner."

"Mr. Bowser, please leave this job to someone else," she pleaded in her tenderest tones. "If you go to daubing about with whitewash you'll get in trouble and blame it all on me. I'll have in a man to-morrow and see that it is well done."

"How'll I blame it on you!" sharply demanded Mr. Bowser.

"I—I don't know, but you will."

"That's all bosh! I never blame anything on you. I shall get into a suit of old clothes and proceed to whitewash. Nothing will happen, except that our lives will be rendered more safe for the next six months."

Mrs. Bowser groaned and turned away. Mr. Bowser

He had got a dose of the mixture in his right eye.

would have begun that job even with both legs broken, and she knew that argument would be thrown away.

In a quarter of an hour he was at work, and she got down the camphor bottle, a box of ointment and a strip

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of adhesive plaster and made ready for what might happen.

Mr. Bowser felt elated as he sniffed at the whitewash. He thought he detected traces of a herd of microbes on the walls, and there was a grim satisfaction in his soul at the thought of swiping them out of existence.

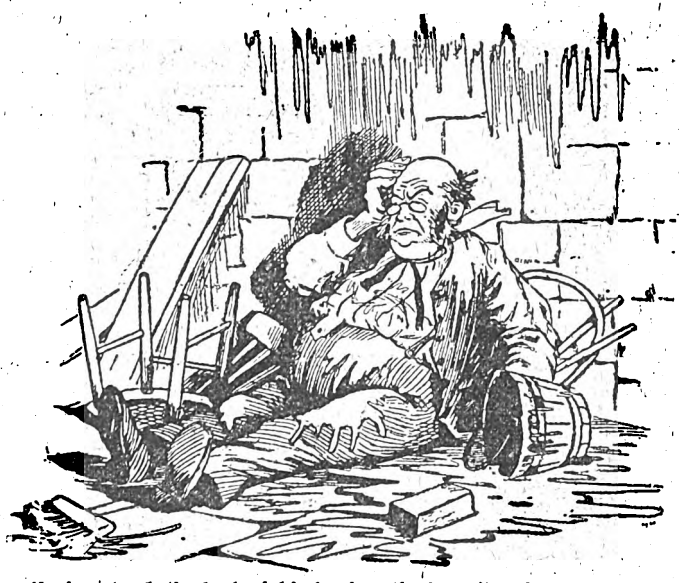
His heart being in his work he put on the mixture with vigorous hand, and was just applying his third brushful when there was a sputter and a spatter and he dropped his brush with a shout.

He had got a dose of the mixture in his right eye. With that optic squinted up until it raised the end of his nose, and the other blinking like a blind horse, he groped his way into the scullery and applied cold water. He hoped to get through with it without a call from Mrs. Bowser, but the pain was still lifting his heels off the floor when she came down and observed:

"Did you call me, Mr. Bowser?"

"No, I didn't call you, and you know I didn't!" he shouted in reply. "It's mighty funi that you have to poke your nose everywhere! When I want you I'll let you know."

"But didn't you call out?"



Having struck the back of his head on the hard floor he was dazed.

"If I did that was my own business. I think I can talk in my own cellar if I take a notion to. A microbe flew into my eye, and I'm getting it out."

She left him, and after a long ten minutes he got enough of the lime out of his eye to enable him to open it again. His bald crown and face had been thickly spattered, but he was not discouraged.

He thought it would be a better plan to begin overhead and work gently until he had got into the swing of it.

He carried two old chairs out of the kitchen and placed them in position, and standing on one and placing the pail on the other he went to work again.

Confidence came to his heart as five minutes slipped away and no tragedy occurred. He had a smooth brick wall to work at, and as he saw it begin to whiten under his brush he felt something of the pride of a born artist.

In five minutes more he might have made himself believe that he was touching up a landscape in the Scotch Hills had he not made a long reach with his brush to overtake a small insect which was hurrying away.

The rickety chair on which he was standing made that an excuse for wobbling about and breaking down, and when Mr. Bowser fell it was of course eminently proper to take the other chair with him.

It was more than a shout this time. It was a yell which lifted Mrs. Bowser out of her chair and made the cook knock the nose off a jug, and the crash which followed almost made the windows rattle.

When Mrs. Bowser got down into the cellar she found a pail of whitewash, two broken chairs and a whitewash brush and Mr. Bowser all mixed up on the cement floor; but Mr. Bowser was not dead. The contents of the pail had soaked him from head to foot, and having struck the back of his head on the hard floor he was dazed and flighty.

With the assistance of the cook he was pulled to the wall and propped up, and a few sniffs of the camphor brought him out of the fog. Then Mrs. Bowser tenderly inquired:

"How did it happen, dear? Did the microbes suddenly attack you?"

A long minute went by before Mr. Bowser could get out a word. Then he slowly replied:

"Woman, I understand! You sneaked down here and kicked the chair from under me, but I am still alive!"

"Don't talk nonsense! Are you hurt!"

"You may go, woman! Go and plot and plan another attempt at murder!"

"But let me——"

"And to-morrow we will end this. Fifteen attempts to murder me in one year and now the end has come!"

"Mr. Bowser, I——"

But he gestured with his right and with his left, and kicked out with his legs, and Mrs. Bowser and the cook withdrew and left him alone with the frisky germs and microbes and fell diseases.

M. Quad.

Next Week: HE SHOWS MRS. BOWSER HOW TO DO SPRING HOUSE-CLEANING.

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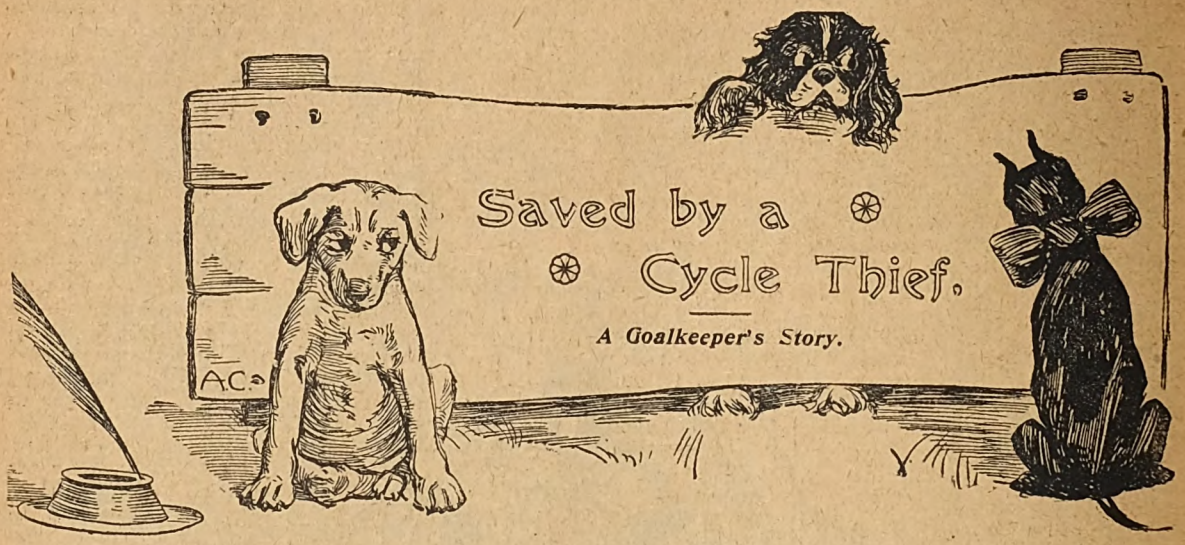

Saved by a Cycle Thief.

A Goalkeeper's Story.

"I CAN'T make it out at all, Jack! I wouldn't hesitate half a minute, if there were a possibility of my playing on Saturday. But you are chosen. The funny thing is that he knows that. It's because I can do no possible harm that I feel like taking the money, if only to teach him a lesson."

It was Tuesday, and the speaker was my understudy in goal for the Dunmire team.

We were playing a big cup-tie the following Saturday, the last of the season, and were so sure of victory that our supporters were laying four to one—where they could get anybody to take it—on our winning.

Everything was such plain sailing that the team had been chosen the previous night, I had been chosen in goal—which, as I was described as the mainstay of the team, was a matter of course—and the only direction we had was to "keep straight and quiet."

It was this probable certainty of our winning which made me so puzzled as I looked into Bill Johnson's face and wondered whether somebody had been "having" him.

A bookmaker, locally known as "Black Jem"—from the darkness of his gipsy-cast countenance, I suppose—had been to him, and had laid fifty sovereigns on the table with the remark that it would be as much more to Bill's interest that the game should be lost.

I had heard of attempts to bribe players, and had often wondered whe her such things happened; but what on earth could be the meaning of this attempt to get at a man who was not to play!

"Well, Bill," I remarked at last, "my advice is that you should not commit yourself; only take care he doesn't get the money back. What, by the way, did he say of the money if you don't keep goal?"

"He said that if I didn't keep goal the money was mine, and that was where I stood to pick up a little fortune for nothing, because he and his friends had taken the odds against your playing."

"Well, stick to the money and keep quiet until you hear from me. Mr. Best, our secretary, will be here in the morning, and I'll tell him."

Bill left me, evidently greatly relieved. The cruel thing about the offer of the bribe was that he needed the money. He had only the previous week told me that owing to having helped his aged father out of a serious difficulty it was probable he would have to put off his wedding.

Still thinking of the incident, and wondering how we could pay Black Jem in his own coin, I took my bike and was soon speeding away to a hamlet some miles away, much frequented by athletes of all kinds at the principal hostelry, at which there was that night to be a smoking concert.

Having put my machine in the usual room with others I was soon enjoying the "smoker" and the only remark which recalled football was a casual one by a man near me that someb dy was being foolish enough to take the odds our supporters were laying against our opponents of the coming Saturday.

About ten I left the concert, and went for my bike, only to find it gone!

All I could find out about it was that a waiter had seen someone he took to be myself passing out with the machine a few minutes before.

It was raining and the person who had walked off with my machine was wearing the cape I had left strapped to the bar, and hence had passed without notice.

The landlord offered me his machine, and I was soon on my way back determined to overhaul my man or put the police on his track.

I had to proceed with irritating caution for the night was dark, with only intermittent flashes of light as the clouds were driven by the wind and ever and anon presented a rift for the moonbeams.

Still, I kept up a fair speed, and soon had an inkling that I was not far behind somebody on a machine; for I heard a driver swearing at a rider, and jeeringly asking him had he ever ridden before.

Quickening my pace, I was rapidly nearing the bottom of the longest incline, when a break in the clouds enabled me to get a glimpse of somebody wobbling along, about a hundred and fifty yards ahead.

It seemed to me that he toppled over just as I lost sight of him. Then I heard what I took to be a

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shriek of pain, and as I drew up and leapt off my machine I heard a voice growl:

"Look out! There's somebody! He's settled!"

As I peered into the darkness, I thought I made out the forms of three men, disappearing in the gloom.

I stood hesitating what to do next, and wondering whether my machine had been collared by a gang, when I was startled by a groan from the left.

Detaching my lamp, and going cautiously forward, I found a man stretched on the ground, and bleeding from a cut on the forehead. I saw he was wearing my cape, whilst my machine was lying a few feet away! It was my bicycle thief, and he had evidently met his deserts.

To my intense relief, for I thought the rascal was badly hurt, I heard the approaching wheels of a cab I had left at the door of the hostelry, waiting for our club secretary.

I hailed it, and the driver bringing one of his lamps we soon had the fellow up, though he was utterly unable to stand.

Poor wretch! He was covered with dirt and blood, and so far as we could make out, appeared almost in the last stages of starvation.

It was evident his left foot had been hurt. What struck me, even then, as singular, was that his right hand appeared badly damaged.

We could not leave even a bicycle thief in such a plight; and having told cabby to put the machines as well as he could on the roof of the vehicle, we lifted the fellow inside, and drove straight into town.

On the way I told Mr. Best what had occurred, and we agreed that after leaving the machines at my house, we would hand our man over to the police where he would get treatment as well as punishment.

This arrangement was not destined to be carried out, for as we lifted the bikes down I noticed for the first time the front wheel of mine was entangled with a long piece of cord.

"Look here, Best," I cried, "somebody's roped him! And now I come to think, I thought I heard someone run away."

Best was too much concerned to notice what I said. He had struck a match and was looking at our prisoner.

"I don't like his looks, Jack," he said. "We had better take him inside and send for a doctor."

We acted on the suggestion, and a surgeon who lived near, was soon in attendance. He said the man was badly shaken, but that his prostration was as much due to starvation as anything else.

He remarked that the bruise on the ankle looked like a kick, and the injury to the right hand, which was covered with blood, puzzled him.

"Why," he cried, "this seems to have been stamped on! If those regular indentations are not nail marks I'm a noodle!"

Whilst he was speaking the famished-looking creature made an effort to raise himself, and huskily shrieked:

"Keep off my hand, yer devils! What are yer kickin' at! I only took it 'cause I wus starvin'?"

He sank back apparently exhausted.

His words had, however, flashed on my mind as a revelation.

Why had he been assailed and kicked? What could have possessed anybody to grind on a man's hand in this fashion.

Could there possibly be any connection between this dastardly affair, and the attempt to bribe Bill Johnson?

Had this poverty-stricken wretch been mistaken for myself, and involuntarily saved me and the club?

In as few words as possible, I told Best and the surgeon, who happened to be a club supporter, of the visit to Bill Johnson and of "Black Jem's" offer.

"It seems to me," observed the doctor, "the whole thing is a plant, and that you, Jack, would have had this fellow's injuries but for his attempting to steal your machine and cape."

"You may depend that's so, Jack," assented Best "You were announced to sing, and they intended settling you, and then nailing Billy Johnson on his acceptance of the £50. And that accounts for a good deal I could not understand about Dick Harris's remark that 'Black Jem's' gang had gone daft over this match, and stood to lose heavily in the event of our winning as seemed an absolute certainty."

We agreed the man's theft was the outcome of want, and were filled with such a sense of gratitude for the service he had, though unwittingly, rendered us, that we decided to send him to the union hospital instead of the police station.

After he had been driven away, we three sat and talked over the situation.

We soon saw how impossible it would be to connect "Black Jem" with the assault, and that the only way to get at him would be to get hold of as much of his money as we could.

This policy was made easy by the fact that we were laying the odds, and Dick Harris, who was let into the secret to get the money on, declared they had "almost sold their last rags."

The whole thing was kept quiet, and the rumour having got out that I had met with an accident, there was quite a buzz of anxious excitement as the team took the field without me.

My triumph, and that of Bill Johnson, too, came when I trotted on the field just on the time to start.

"Black Jem" sat brazenly in a front seat on the reserved stand, smoking a big cigar.

I really thought he would have fainted as I momentarily eyed him. His cigar fell from his mouth and he turned literally a ghastly green as the spectators cheered.

We won all right. I don't think I ever kept goal better. Our opponents declared that if I had exchanged with their man they would not have lost. As it was our score was three to none.

"Black Jem" was not there when we had finished. He was wanted by several who had taken his odds on the visitors, for he had been sure enough of the game to begin to reverse the odds.

The Monday following Bill Johnson got a letter demanding the return of the fifty pounds "under pain of exposure."

My reply—on Bill Johnson's behalf—that he could have the money when he came to settle with the man his blackguards had mistaken for me, apparently settled him. At any rate we never heard from him again.

To this day many people in Dunmire wonder how "Black Jem" got so far wrong over that game.

Not even now do they know how much they owe the hungry bicycle thief, or how completely, in the case of that cup tie, the biters were bitten.

T.

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Absence Makes The Heart Grow Fonder.

"It's all rot you fellows talking in that way," cried Prior of the *Morning Patriot*. "'Absence makes the heart grow fonder' is very nice and fine in theory, but it doesn't work out in practice. If two persons are separated for a long time, they will not be as fond of each other, when they meet again, as they were before they parted."

"What if the two persons happen to be engaged, or are husband and wife?" asked Simpson, the London correspondent of a New York paper.

"Well, it's just the same thing. In a short time, the two lovers would forget all about each other and probably marry someone else. And in the case of the husband and wife there would probably be, a divorce case in the end."

"You're talking off the book now," chimed in Smythe, of the *Daily Bugle*. "There are plenty of lovers and plenty of married people who have survived years of separation."

"Just so, but they are the exceptions that prove the rule."

"Perhaps, perhaps not. There are plenty of cases that we never hear anything about. What do you think of it, Whiteley?"

Simpson was speaking to a little bald-headed man, who so far, had taken no part in the discussion. He was the City editor of a great London daily.

"I think you fellows are mostly idiots," he answered. "I used to talk like young Prior once, but I know better now. If you care to listen 'I will a tale unfold.'"

"Fire away," they chorussed, for Whiteley was noted for his yarns.

"The story I am about to tell you," continued the City editor, "happened several years ago. I can vouch for its accuracy for I knew all the persons concerned. At that time I was sub-editor on a large daily in a certain provincial town. The chief was a pretty decent sort of fellow, and after we had put the paper to bed, most of us used to stay on at the office until daylight smoking and chating.

"One night the conversation got round to the question you have been discussing—does absence make the heart grow fonder? The chief held the same opinions that young Prior does, and used very similar arguments. Most of us disagreed with him however.

"At that time, we had a young reporter named Wilson on the staff. He was a very clever young fellow, and should have made a name in his profession. This Wilson was engaged to a young lady named Miss Evans, who was employed as a typist in the advertisement department. They were known to be extremely fond of each other, and Wilson was a continual butt for the jokes of his colleagues.

"In order to prove his argument, the chief considerably surprised us, by offering to bet any one of us any reasonable sum, that after twelve months' separation Wilson and Miss Evans would no longer be lovers. None of us took the bet, but the chief, who could be a bit of a brute when he liked, determined to carry out his project, and endeavour to prove his assertions. We remonstrated with him as much as we dared, but the devil was in him just then, and he remained obdurate.

"That morning, Wilson received twenty-four hours' notice to start for Ashanti to act as war correspondent to the paper. He left next day, and we went down to the station in a body to wish him God-speed. Of course Miss Evans was there, and the parting of the two lovers was extremely affecting. It was unusually so to us who knew the real reason why Wilson was going out. Miss Evans was in tears, begging and praying Wilson to take care of himself and carrying on, as women usually do under such circumstances. As for Wilson, he was almost equally affected, although he was rather elated at being chosen to act for the paper in such a capacity.

"Wilson very quickly proved himself to be the right man in the right place, and the proprietors congratulated the chief on his choice of a war correspondent. His long absence did not seem to have any effect on Miss Evans' affection for him; in fact I think it rather increased it, than otherwise. She wrote, and sent him books and tobacco and things, by every mail; while on his part, he sent her a letter at every opportunity. She used to carry these about with her, and many a time I caught her reading passages from them, during the intervals of work. Once, when she thought no one was about, I caught her kissing his photo. The war was a long one, owing to the rainy season stopping operations for a time. Thus it happened that a year after Wilson's departure he was still in Ashanti; but Miss Evans' affection for him was apparently as strong as ever.

"Late one night the agencies sent us news of a great British victory which had been won during the day. But, to our surprise, no cable came from Wilson, although he was one of the smartest men at the front.

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Next morning, we found the explanation in the official dispatch—Wilson was among the list of missing. We determined to hush it up, and endeavour to keep it from the ears of his sweetheart. But, that day further particulars came to hand, and the evening papers were full of his story. Wilson had been severely wounded whilst attempting to save the life of a young officer whose horse had been shot under him.

"Miss Evans bought a paper on her way home from the office, and read the news. She gave one little shriek and then fell down on the pavement in a dead faint. I happened to be walking just behind her, so I saw that she was properly attended to and afterwards sent home in a cab.

"She did not appear at the office in the morning, but when we arrived in the evening, the business manager told us that she had just called to resign her situation. She had informed him that it was her intention to leave for Ashanti next day. He had pointed out to her that she could be of very little use out there and had attempted to dissuade her. Finding it to be useless however, he did all in his power to aid her in her project.

"The following morning, we were once more gathered on the railway platform, to say good-bye to another of our number. At seven o'clock that night the *Royal Heron* left port; and Miss Evans was a passenger on board. You all remember what happened to that ill-fated vessel. She went ashore off Cape Finisterre, during a heavy gale, and only seventeen persons were saved. Miss Evans was not among that number: she went down with the ship.

"Five minutes after the arrival of the news of the wreck, we received a cable from Wilson. He stated that he was badly wounded, but that there was every hope of recovery. The war being practically at an end, the rag had no more need of a 'special,' and he was on his way home. I took the two telegrams to the chief. He read them through and then buried his face in his hands and sobbed like a man who has just sustained an irreparable loss. When he looked up again there was a look of mingled fear and agony on his face, such as I never wish to see on the face of living man again. Never afterwards was he the same man as before.

"In due course Wilson arrived. None of us dared to go to the station to meet him. He turned up at the office in the afternoon, and, as the chief had not arrived, went straight to the room where Miss Evans used to work. Her chair was occupied by another. He went upstairs, thinking that perhaps she had been transferred to the 'Editorial.' None of us had come down and the rooms were empty. In the reporter's room however, he found the chief reporter and asked for Miss Evans. He was a new man whom Wilson had never met before. He had heard Wilson's story, but he never thought of connecting it with the man who stood before him.

"'Miss Evans?' he replied. 'Do you mean a typist who used to be engaged in the advertisement department? She's not here now.'

"'Not here! How's that? Why did she leave?' demanded Wilson.

"'It's rather a sad story,' replied the unsuspecting chief reporter. 'She was engaged to a fellow named Wilson who was sent out to Ashanti as a war correspondent. He was wounded and she determined to go out to him. She sailed in the *Royal Heron* and was—— Why what's the matter with you, are you ill?' But Wilson had rushed from the office without replying.

"Next day the paper contained an account of the suicide of its unfortunate war correspondent."

"And the chief?" asked Prior.

"Resigned his position and accepted a berth as editor of a rag, somewhere in the Straits Settlements," answered Whiteley. "I have never heard about him since."

HARRY FLISHER.

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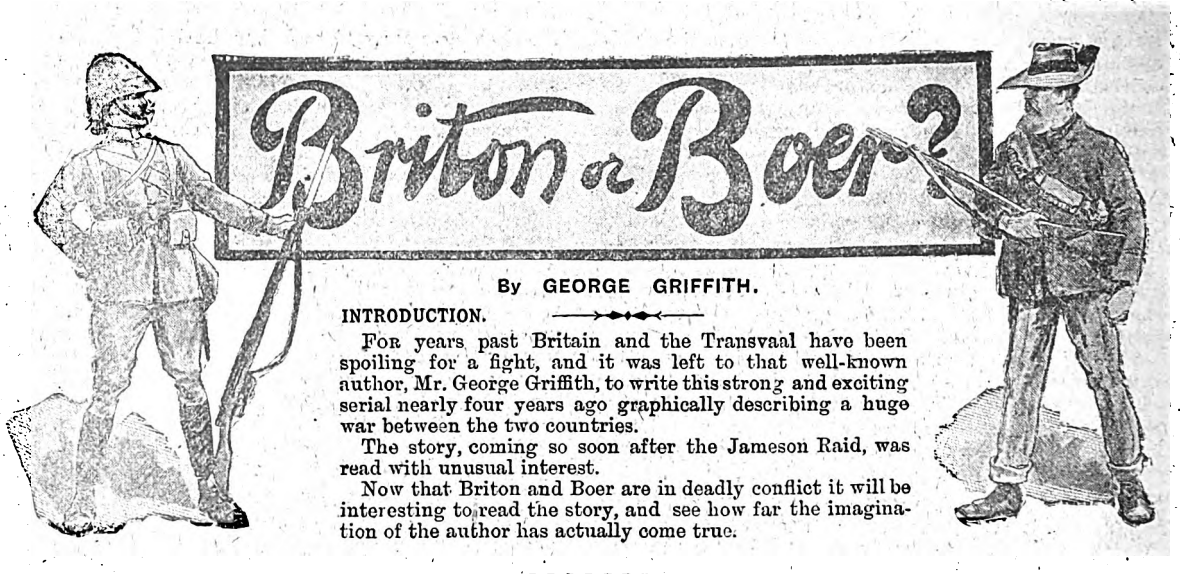


By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

INTRODUCTION.

For years past Britain and the Transvaal have been spoiling for a fight, and it was left to that well-known author, Mr. George Griffith, to write this strong and exciting serial nearly four years ago graphically describing a huge war between the two countries.

The story, coming so soon after the Jameson Raid, was read with unusual interest.

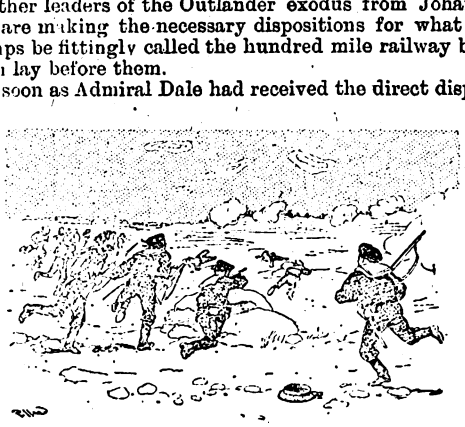
Now that Briton and Boer are in deadly conflict it will be interesting to read the story, and see how far the imagination of the author has actually come true.

CHAPTER XXII.

A Facer from the Sea.

In order to keep in touch with the events which were happening in such rapid succession, and in such widely separated parts of the southern portion of the African continent, it will be necessary to once more shift the scene from the interior to the sea-coast, and therefore I shall have to ask the reader to be good enough to avail himself of the special facilities of travel conferred by the good-natured Genius of Fiction, and transport himself from Elandsfontein Junction to Delagoa Bay, while Commander Robertson and the other leaders of the Outlander exodus from Johannesburg are making the necessary dispositions for what may perhaps be fittingly called the hundred mile railway battle which lay before them.

As soon as Admiral Dale had received the direct dispatch



Struck the first blow against the Boers on Transvaal soil.

from Downing Street, the contents of which he had communicated to the council of war assembled in his room on board the *Majestic*, he had instructed Lieutenant Ferris to cable it to General Goodenough, at Cape Town, together with a dispatch announcing the surrender of the Russian squadron and the capture of the German merchantmen in Delagoa Bay. To this he added a private telegram in cipher informing the General that, under existing circumstances, it would be impossible for him to immediately obey the first cablegram which had been sent from Cape Town, and strongly urging that Rear-Admiral Rawson, in command of the regular South African Squadron, should at once make every possible provision for watching the ports, and preventing any vessels from leaving or entering them until a personal conference became practicable.

He next ordered the *Victorious*, with the cruisers *Endymion* and *Grafton*, and the destroyers *Boxer* and *Bruiser*, to cruise off the land at a distance of thirty miles from Inyack Island, in order to intercept any hostile fleet which, as Admiral Tcherkov had hinted, might possibly be advancing from the north on Delagoa Bay.

Prior to this, however, he had made a general draft on the *personnel* of the fleet for the formation of the Naval Brigade, to whose doings Prince Regna had alluded at dinner on New Year's Eve. This consisted of 250 marines, and 100 bluejackets, with two twelve-pounder field guns, two three-pounder Nordenfeldts, and three Maxims. It was this force which, with 250 men of the Leicestershire Regiment under Captain Pearson, had been sent by train across the deadly, low-lying Fever Country—the belt of land which lies between the Transvaal border and the coast—to strike the first blow that was actually struck against the Boers on Transvaal soil.

Thanks to the prompt cutting of the telegraph wires and seizure of the rolling-stock in Lorenco Marques, the expedition reached the border before the Boers had anytime to mass in sufficient numbers to make any effective opposition.

The country through which the railway runs across the border is of an exceedingly difficult nature from the point of view of an attacking force, and had it been adequately defended there might have been great difficulty in achieving what was accomplished. The Lebongo Mountains, which form the natural boundary between the two territories, divide in a somewhat narrow valley through which the line passes for some miles along the Koomati River, which is crossed on the Transvaal side by a long iron bridge.

The river is broken up by broad and, in flood time, as it was now, impassable rapids, and the slopes of the mountains are broken into steep terraces and strewn with rocks and boulders. They, in fact, present a series of natural fortifications, which could be held by a few hundred well-equipped men provided with proper artillery against a force of ten or twenty times their strength. If the Boers had sufficient warning to give them time to cross the Portuguese frontier as they undoubtedly would have done, and pull up the rails on the eastern side of the mountains, so as

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to force the British to fight their way through the valley, the undertaking would have been a very serious one, indeed.

But happily the promptness with which the Admiral had acted had precluded this, and the two trains, carrying the marines and bluejackets, had actually crossed the frontier, cleared the bridge, and got to work on Transvaal soil before the alarm had had time to reach the capital. This had consumed the remainder of the day of 17th, and the greater part of the night.

On the morning of the 18th, a force of about fifteen hundred Boers, hurriedly collected from the sparsely populated country, had assembled at Raapmuiden Junction, and reinforcements had been telegraphed for up the line to Middleburg and Pretoria. The telegrams, dispatched in a moment of panic, had conveyed the astounding if utterly exaggerated news that a great British fleet had taken possession of Delagoa Bay and landed an army of several thousand men, which had crossed the frontier, and was advancing in hot haste on Pretoria, and it was this intelligence which had made the alarmed burghers upset the plans of the Government by insisting upon all the available forces in the north and east of the Republic being concentrated along the railway route from the capital to the frontier.

This, although not exactly forseen by Admiral Dale, was exactly what he would have wished to bring about, and Captain Pearson, who, jointly with Captain Vivian of the Marines, had command of the expedition, grasped the situation at once. It should be mentioned here, by-the-way, that the Admiral had given the command of the bluejackets to Lieutenant Ferris by way of consolation for what he had lost in the *Thrasher*.

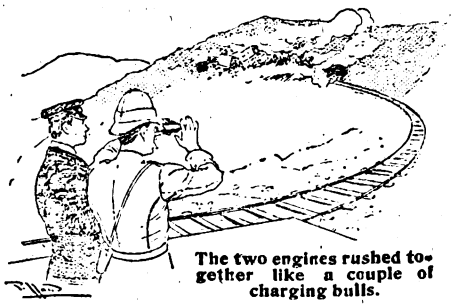
Without giving the Boers any time to put their usual tactics into practice, the two British captains shelled Raapmuiden the moment that it became light enough to train the guns, detrained their men under cover of the shell-fire, and then took them in with the bayonet. But before this, and while it was still dark, the bluejackets had occupied the slopes to the south of the line, and planted a Maxim on a little hill which commands both the main line and the Barberton cranch.

It was the first time that Boers and bluejackets had ever met in fight, and, as Mr. Secretary Leyds had said, the Boers didn't understand the bluejackets a bit. Instead of allowing them to entrench themselves behind the stones and then charging up to their rifle-muzzles, as the red-coats had done in the war of '80 and '81, these strange creatures, active as monkeys and fierce as tigers, had scattered and come on in little rushes of twos and threes and half-dozens, taking advantage of every rock and stone, and shooting only at close quarters and with disgusting precision.

A brilliant idea struck Lieutenant Ferris.

The light was not good enough for long shots, for the attack of the bluejackets had purposely been made before dawn, so that by the time day broke the Boers, who had attempted to take up positions on the slopes and about the railway embankments, found themselves out-flanked by their strange antagonists, and exposed, whenever they showed themselves in any considerable numbers, to the sweeping fire of the Maxim on the hill.

Four times with dogged valour they attempted to storm the hill, and four times they had to retire before the storm of bullets, which swept down every man who showed himself. At length, towards midday, they came to the conclusion that the game was not quite worth the candle. They had neither artillery or machine-guns, and the *rooineks* had both, so they decided to retire into the hills towards Krokodilpoort and wait for reinforcements from Middleburg before driving the insolent English back into the sea.



The two engines rushed together like a couple of charging bulls.

It so happened that just as they were in full retreat a long train emerged from the hills about six miles away, and came swinging rapidly down the line. The two twelve-pounders were immediately got into position, one on each of the station platforms, and fire was opened on the advancing train while the British force was re-embarking in its own train. Shell after shell burst near the advancing Boer train, but it was too far off and advancing too rapidly for accurate shooting.

Then a brilliant idea struck Lieutenant Ferris. A Netherlands Railway engine which had brought a detachment of Boers down from the Barberton district was still in the station with steam up. He went to Captain Pearson and said, pointing to it:

"There's an engine we don't want. Why not start it off full speed up the line on its own account, and let them smash? That will stop them if anything will."

"Bravo, Ferris!" replied Captain Pearson, patting him on the shoulder. "That's the very thing. Go and tell a couple of your fellows to stoke her up all she'll stand, have our train backed out of the way to let her pass, and then send her off."

It was a job after the men's own hearts. They backed the engine off the branch line, and on to the main line, piling in the coal and raking up the furnace until the steam began to roar out of the safety valve. Then they got two iron "chairs," weighing about a hundredweight each, lashed them together, hung them over the valve, and then threw the throttle-valve open and jumped off.

The engine puffed and snorted furiously, and started off with a series of quick bucking jumps, and then, as one of the marines put it, she settled down to her stride, and went up the slope like a Derby winner.

Soldier and sailor alike held his breath and waited for the smash, and the retreating Boers stared open-mouthed and wild-eyed at the atrocity that these strange devils from the sea had been guilty of. As for those on the train, they had neither time nor space to do anything in particular. Their engine, with the heavily-loaded carriages behind it, had been swinging down the incline at a speed that made sudden stoppage impossible and jumping off a matter of imminent risk to life and limb.

Meanwhile the other engine was gaining in speed at every yard. Brakes were put hard down, but the train slid on with terrible velocity in the midst of a cloud of sparks and smoke. The engine-driver and stoker jumped for their lives, and the men began swarming out of the carriages on to the foot-boards.

Then the crash came.

The two engines rushed together like a couple of charging bulls; then they reared up on end and fell over on their sides, and the carriages, crushed and telescoped into each other, reeled in a confused mass of wreckage off the line,

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and rolled down the long embankment with their shrieking, struggling loads of maimed and dying.

"I don't quite know if one could call that war strictly according to Cocker," said Captain Pearson, as he took his glasses from his eyes.

"Perhaps not," said Lieutenant Ferris; "but, anyhow, it's stopped the beggars, and we can't afford to give them any chances."

"That's just what I think," said Captain Vivian drily, "and besides, why shouldn't you ram a train as well as a cruiser or a battleship, especially when you can do it without hurting yourself, as the rammer generally does."

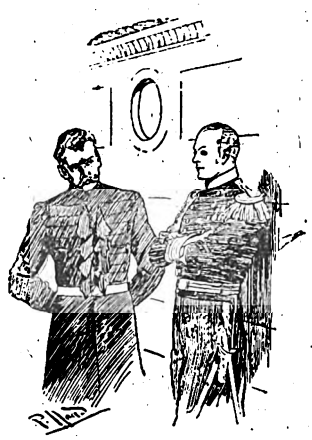
While the engine had been charging up the line the two twelve-pounders had been rapidly limbered up and hoisted into their respective waggons. The train was then drawn well out of the station, and two mines, which a party of sappers attached to the Leicestershire Regiment had been busy laying under the station platforms and buildings, were exploded. The junction was completely wrecked, the lines torn up and the embankment destroyed.

This serious blow was struck with complete success and very little loss of life at a point forty-five miles inside the Transvaal from the Portuguese border; but it was by no means the only one, for the object of the expedition was to absolutely sever the Republic from the sea on the side on which it had so far had the only access to be obtained without passing through British territory.

As the train returned towards the border every bridge and conduit-crossing was destroyed, and finally the great bridge across the Koomati, at its junction with the Krokodil, was utterly demolished. Heavy dynamite charges were put into both the end-bastions and each of the piers, and in a few seconds the simultaneous explosions undid the work of months, and the isolation of the Republic was complete.

The building of a rough but very strong fort, which absolutely commanded the junction of the two rivers, was then immediately put in hand. Gangs of black labourers were brought up in train loads from the coast, and the very guns and ammunition which the German steamers, seized in Delagoa Bay, had brought for the service of the Transvaal, were used in furnishing it.

The building of this fortress, in a practically impregnable position, flanked on two sides by broad rivers broken by rapids, and swarming with crocodiles, situated in a country in which neither horse nor ox can live, and having complete and rapid communication with the base on the coast, was, as the event proved, a work of the very first importance in its bearings on the future fortunes of the war, and when it was finished the keyhole of Africa was definitely plugged for the time being.



"If the Cape were only loyal we could snap our fingers."

The moral effect of the striking of this swift and effective blow was also very great. For the first time in the sad and shameful history of their conflicts, the Briton had met and decisively thrashed the Boer. The tradition of invincibility was broken; reinforcements, withdrawn from the other frontiers, came down in thousands to meet the great British army which had no existence—only to find themselves confronted by the impassable rivers and the impregnable forts beyond, and to be speedily driven back by the terrible Tsetse fly and the unsparing malarial fevers.

On the 22nd of December Admiral Dale, having made the necessary arrangements for joining hands with the British forces in the north, left the battleship *Victorious*, with the cruisers *Endymion*, *Edgar*, and *Grafton*, and the destroyers, *Boxer*, *Bruiser*, and *Ferret*, as a squadron of observation and occupation behind him in Delagoa Bay, steamed south with the rest of his force and the Russian prizes to Capetown to confer with General Goodenough and Rear-Admiral Rawson, on the details of the general scheme of defence and possibly of retaliation, which had been gradually forming in his mind.

When he dropped anchor in Table Bay on the morning of the 30th, the General came off to the flag-ship to welcome him, and almost the first words that he said when he and the Admiral were alone were:

"I'm afraid we can't expect any more help from home, but the other colonies evidently don't mean to stand by and see the Dutchmen smash us. Five thousand Australians are embarking at Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide, and ten thousand more are getting ready to come. Canada promises five thousand men and horses as soon as they can be got across the Pacific, and—better than all, I might almost say—I've had a cable from Sir Charles Warren telling me that he has resigned his Indian appointment, and is coming over to help us. Believe me, the Boers would rather hear of ten thousand troops being landed than of that one man coming."

CHAPTER XXIII.

How Matters Stood at the Cape.

"That's good news, indeed," said Admiral Dale heartily. "That man will be worth an army to us. It isn't everyone that loves him, I know, and he's not been altogether well treated at home, but there's one thing certain—the worse enemy a man is of England's, the worse he hates Charles Warren. We shall see that when we get to Pretoria."

"Pretoria!" echoed General Goodenough, with a grave smile. "My dear Dale, Pretoria is a very long way off Cape Town just now. I'm afraid, if the truth must be told, it's a good deal shorter distance from Pretoria to Cape Town. You take my meaning, of course?"

"Oh, certainly," said the Admiral, with a laugh. "You mean that the Dutchmen are more than half way here already."

"My dear fellow, they *are* here," said the Colonel, with a gesture of disgust. "If the Cape were only loyal we could snap our fingers at the Boers, but the whole place is honeycombed with disloyalty and treason. That's the plain fact of it. Indeed, if I had not been able to persuade the High Commissioner to proclaim martial law throughout the whole Colony the moment we heard the news from the North, and if Lawson and I had not taken very prompt measures in manning the forts and bringing the *St. George* round into the bay, and then issuing a proclamation stating that at the first armed rising we would shell the town, the Cape peninsula would by this time no longer be English ground. It was a terribly strong measure, but it frightened them."

"And, therefore, the very thing to do," said the Admiral, "One has to take one's gloves off to do this kind of work, and we shall have our coats off, too, before it's over. But now tell me the rest of the news. I'm about a fortnight behind, you know, except for what I've heard by cable. What did you do after the proclamation?"

"The first thing we did," said the General, "was to issue another one calling upon all male citizens between the ages of twenty and sixty, who intended to remain loyal to the flag, to enrol themselves as volunteers within forty-eight hours, and proclaiming all who failed to respond to the call as traitors to the Crown, and subject to the penalties of treason. All who appeared with arms in their hands

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A confused mass of wreckage rolled down the long embankment.

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without authority, after the date of the proclamation were to be treated as rebels against the Queen's authority, and as such subject to summary conviction by court-martial, which would entail the punishment of death, and confiscation of property.

"The Governor of Natal, I may say, issued an almost identical proclamation at the same time. The effect of this, coupled with the knowledge that every town on the peninsula was at our mercy, as I say, stopped a general rising of the Dutch. About fifteen thousand burghers responded, and we are arming them as rapidly as possible, but we are terribly short of good rifles and amunition."

"The time for talk has gone past."

"Ah, then you'll be glad to hear," the Admiral interrupted with a reassuring smile, "that I've brought you a nice little present from Delagoa Bay. We collared no less than three German steamer-loads of weapons and ammunition intended for the Transvaal. I've got about twelve thousand brand-new Mauser rifles of the Martini pattern—very like our Martini-Metfords, you know, but a trifle bigger calibre—and I should say a couple of million rounds of ammunition for them, and I've got Maxims, Nordenfeldts, Gatlings, and Hotchkisses, Krupp field guns, and shot and shell to any amount, I might almost say, so if you've got the men there won't be much trouble about the arms. What about the other fellows? Surely there ought to be more than fifteen thousand men in all Cape Colony capable of bearing arms. I should have thought there were three times that number."

"So there are," said the General, gravely, "and that is the most serious part of the business, although your good news happily makes it much less serious. Most of the inland towns I regret to say are Dutch, and disloyal almost to a man. We know how terribly mistaken, to use the mildest possible term, was the policy which forced us here to sit still and watch these fellows arming themselves with the best kinds of rifles, buying out the gun-shops in fact, with money that we were practically certain came from the Transvaal, while we never took any measures even to strengthen our own volunteer force, or to give the men we had better weapons.

"The consequence is that we know there must be some forty or fifty thousand men who have not responded to the proclamation, and are simply keeping dark with arms in their possession, safely hidden away somewhere, and waiting quietly for the Free State to move. The moment that happens they'll be up and out in regularly organised commandoes—for all that has been going on, too, right under our very noses."

"Oh, then the Free State has not moved yet? How's that?" said the Admiral with lifted eye-brows. "That's a pleasant surprise. I quite expected when we got here to hear that they had crossed the frontier in thousands, and had probably overrun the whole north of the Colony."

"There are probably several reasons for that," said the General. "Some of them are plain to me, others I confess I don't understand. The first is undoubtedly the Basutos. The moment that the Transvaal declared war Lerothodi sent messages to Maritzburg and here, telling us that in three days he would have twenty thousand warriors ready to move if we wanted them, and he told us, too, that he had sent a message to Bloemfontein, telling the Free State President that he had heard that the Dutch were going to eat up the English, and when they had done that they could eat up his country too. He said he didn't want war with anyone, but if there was going to be war his people would fight, and they would not fight for the Dutch.

"This was checkmate to the Free Staters so far as their south-eastern border was concerned, for those Basutos are perfect demons to fight, and no one knows it better than they do.

"Then again, the De Beers people have turned up perfect trumps. The moment the news reached them the Directors met and voted a war-fund of a million. Nearly every man turned out with a rifle of some sort, and those who didn't were promptly clapped into gaol and kept there. They shut the mines down, and turned all the niggers who hadn't run away on to throwing up earthworks. I rushed three Maxims and a couple of 7-pounders, which I had to take out of the ships, up to them by train, and within a couple of days they had the place almost fortified. They have a magnificent staff, you know, and it's organised like an army. Well, that was check number two.

"Our taking the bull by the horns so promptly here was probably check number three. Your appearance in Delagoa Bay was number four. What I don't quite understand is, how the general rising of the Dutch throughout South Africa, which was evidently planned by Leyds and his colleagues, missed fire, as it certainly did. There must have been some disagreement between the Transvaal and the Free State, and, of course, something quite unexpected may possibly have happened in the North."

"At the same time," said the Admiral, as the General paused for a moment, "I suppose, as a matter of fact, we should recognise that the North is lost, at any rate for the present?"

"I'm not at all so sure of that," said the General. "Of course, the Boers have the whole frontier and the railway down almost as far as Fourteen Streams. That's the point, you know, where the big railway bridge is near to the junction of the three frontiers. Of what has happened in Rhodesia we, of course, know nothing. We have had no news whatever since the 16th. Still, Carrington is not the man to be eaten in a mouthful. He has some splendid fellows with him, and I've a sort of notion that he'll be a very tough nut for the Boers to crack. However, it is unfortunately true that we must leave him and the North out of our calculations for the present. What we have to do is to look after the Colony and Natal."

"And the coast!" added the Admiral. "By-the-way, is there any news from home?"

"Nothing more than you know already, I'm afraid. You see, you have the cables on the east coast; we have none on the west, and the mail service stopped a week ago. The last news we had was by the *Moor*, and that of course was a fortnight old when she got here. We've stopped all mail communications, now in accordance with the arrangements you made from Delagoa Bay, but I suppose in view of this cable from Australia we may as well open communications that way.

"Oh, yes, of course, and with Canada *viâ* Vancouver and New Zealand as well," said the Admiral. "It certainly looks as though we in South Africa have to fight this business out either on our own resources or with what help we may get from the other colonies, and we certainly can't afford to do without any help that they can give us. The coast we have absolutely at command so far. When we get these Russian ships refitted and manned, I think Rawson and I can guarantee that nothing, armed or unarmed, shall come into or leave any South African port without our knowledge and consent. That you can rely upon absolutely.

"I ought to have told you, by-the-way, that I have sent a strong force of marines and the Leicestershire men, under Captain Pearson, convoyed by a couple of cruisers, up to

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Beira, to join Carrington and bring him out of the country, if possible. I take it that we want him and his men in Natal, or here, much more than in the North. Rhodesia must take care of itself for the present."

"Exactly," said the General. "At present we here can only stand on the defensive, and watch the enemy on our own ground till the Australians and Canadians arrive. If it wasn't for that infernal Africander Bond and its understanding with the Transvaal and Free State Governments, the work would be comparatively easy."

Here the General looked at the clock, and got up from his chair, and went on:

"But dear me, I've been quite forgetting how time is getting on. We are to have a Council of War at the Government House in less than an hour's time. You had better come ashore with me and we'll thrash the whole thing out there. Between ourselves, Rawson and I have been urging the High Commissioner to dissolve the Cape Parliament by proclamation. At the sitting last night some of those Bond fellows—Du Toit, Malan, Merryman, Bauer, and others of the sort—had the cheek to get up and make speeches which, under the circumstances, were absolutely seditious, though I am glad to say the majority was entirely against them.

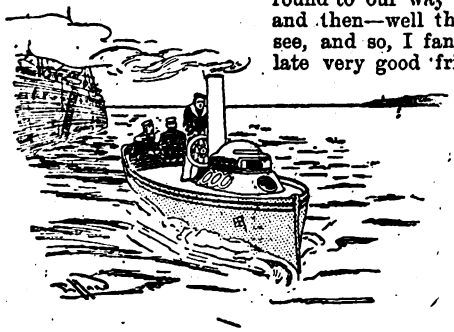
"Now, between ourselves, that sort of stuff may be all very well in times of peace, but when war's declared and the country is under martial law, it won't do at all. I think these fellows ought to be impeached, and, if necessary, put under lock and key. That's what I'm going to propose, at any rate, and if you'll agree with me I shall be glad if you'll come with me and support me."

"With the greatest pleasure," said Admiral Dale, rising from his seat. "I take it that the time for talk has gone past, and if we only had Sir Charles here just now, I'm perfectly certain that he would be the first man to agree with me."

"Save one," said the General, putting out his hand. "Let me be the first. I am glad to see that we are in such perfect accord."

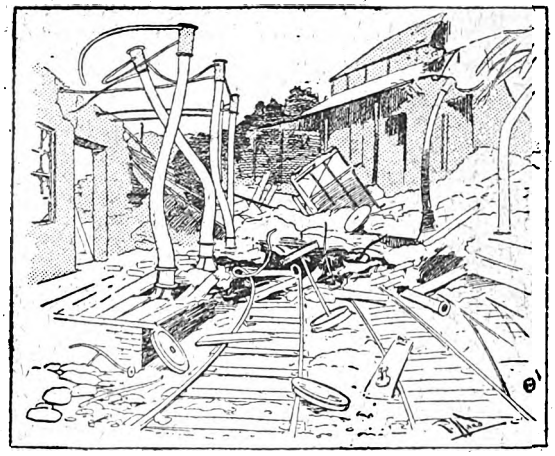
"This is not the sort of time for people like us to differ, my dear General," said Admiral Dale as their hands joined. "If we don't stand together, who the deuce is going to save South Africa from the Boers, I should like to know?"

"Exactly," replied the General, "now let us get ashore and go to work. With allies like you and Rawson, who fortunately thinks just as we do, I don't think I shall have very much difficulty in bringing his Lordship entirely round to our way of thinking, and then—well then we shall see, and so, I fancy, will our late very good friends, President Kruger and his hyper-sensitive Boers who pretended to think that we were going to conquer the Transvaal last spring with about five hundred troops."



General Goodenough and Admiral Dale were seated in the steam pinnace.

"Very well," said the Admiral, "I am entirely at your service, and as long as it is a question of fighting as opposed to talking, you can rely upon my being at one with you right through. My own idea is practically identical with yours—to dissolve Parliament forthwith, with the consent of the loyal majority, constitute a Council of Colonial Defence of not more than seven members, including his Lordship as titular chairman, invite Natal to do the same, join forces, and have community of action in all things and think of nothing whatever but tackling the common enemy. We must leave all inter-colonial differences to be settled when this business is over. If we don't do that we can be pretty well certain that the Boers will settle them for us."



The great Junction had ceased to exist save as a wilderness of ruins.

Within ten minutes General Goodenough and Admiral Dale were seated in the stern-sheets of the *Majestic's* steam pinnace, an their way to take part in the Council of War, on the decision of which the fate of British rule in South Africa to all intents and purposes depended.

CHAPTER XXIV.

War on Wheels.

Heilfberg is one of the most important centres of communication in the Transvaal, as it is the meeting place of four of the great waggon-transport tracks, in addition to being a station on the direct railway route between the Rand and Natal. Commander Robertson clearly foresaw that here the first big battle would have to be fought, and that unless he moved very quickly the Boers would gather there in overwhelming force, and effectually bar his way to the South. He had nothing to fear from the North for several hours, since no troops or guns could be brought down by train, nor could orders be sent south by telegraph.

For any considerable number of troops to be moved from Pretoria upon Elandsfontein or Germiston with field or machine-guns, it would take at the very least a matter of twelve or fifteen hours. For the mounted Boers, armed with nothing but their rifles, he had very little concern, for he knew that they would give the trains a respectfully wide berth as soon as they found that they were armed with machine-guns. The line, too, runs almost the whole way to the border over the open High Veld, and as long as the guns worked, no troops could get within striking distance of the trains. With many strong and willing hands at command, the train-convoys were rapidly got into both travelling and fighting shape. There were three of them, not counting the one which had been sent on under Captain Mellish to Germiston and Heidelberg. The first was a fighting train, consisting entirely of trucks protected with three or four thicknesses of corrugated iron. This was mainly loaded with guns and ammunition. Two maxims and a seven-pounder were mounted on the first and last trucks, the others were occupied by about a thousand men, who might be regarded as the front division of Commander Robertson's little army.

The second train followed this at a distance of about a

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mile. It was composed almost entirely of the big Cape Government railway saloons in which the women and children were stowed away as comfortably as might be under the circumstances. An iron-guarded truck at each end carried a Maxim and a Gatling, the cross-fire of which would be quite sufficient to prevent any living being coming near the train.

He trained his Maxim on the detachment of Boers.

The third train was a composite one. It had a string of armed trucks in front and in the rear, and a long line of saloons and compartment carriages in the middle for the accommodation of the remainder of the women and children. It had two seven-pounders and two maxims mounted ahead, and one seven-pounder and a three-pound quick-firing Nordenfeldt and a Hotchkiss mounted to the rear.

All three trains carried strong parties of men accustomed to railway work, with picks, shovels, and crow-bars and other necessary tools to repair and relay the line in case it should be found to be torn up by the Boers.

The dawn was just beginning to steal, grey and cold, over the bare, bleak, High Veld, when the first of the three trains moved slowly out of the station. As soon as it was clear of the points, the second, with a heavy Cape engine in front and a Netherland twelve-wheeled locomotive behind, followed it. Then came the third and heaviest train, with two Netherland engines ahead and a big Cape one in the middle between the trucks and the saloons.

Outside the station the mounted men were drawn up into two parties of about five hundred each, and as the first train pulled out on the Veld they went away with it at the best speed of their horses to join the advanced guard at Germiston.

The two divisions of horse were under the command of Captains Maclure and Nesbitt. Commander Robertson rode on the rear train, but kept in touch with the others by means of a simple system of whistle-signals which he had arranged with the officers he had chosen to take charge of them. The first of these was Captain Edward James, late of the Royal Engineers, and "No. 2" was under the command of Lieutenant Draper, of the Cape Volunteer Artillery, who happened to be on a visit to Johannesburg on the fatal 16th of December, and had not been able to get back in consequence of the closing of the lines.

When the last train was clear of the station a couple of truck-loads of dynamite, for which no other use could be found, were run into the middle of it, a detonator with a ten-minute fuse was attached to one of them, and the three trains went on their way at the best speed practicable. At the end of the ten minutes the fate that had befallen Fordsburg in February overwhelmed the junction of Elandsfontein.

A huge chasm was dug right in the midst of the station, buildings and fragments of platforms, bits of trucks and wheels were sent flying far and wide through the air, rails and sleepers were torn up and rent and twisted up into the most grotesque shapes, and within a few seconds the great junction and *entrepôt* of the Transvaal had ceased to exist save as a wilderness of ruins.

As the roar of the explosion, and the crashing of the shattered structures and falling fragments of wreckage died away behind them, the sound of firing came up the lines from Germiston. The first train immediately ran on ahead of the horse, and as Captain James came within sight of the junction, he saw that a considerable body of Boers, apparently some seven or eight hundred, had come in from the west, and were making a determined effort to get possession of the telegraph office before the wires could be cut down on either side of it.

He also saw that about a third of them were trying to fight their way round across the line leading to the Free State, evidently with the object of pulling up the rails on the Natal line, and so blocking all further progress to the South. The moment he found how matters were going, he ordered his engineer to whistle loudly for the cavalry to come up. Then he backed his train out clear of the station so as to get his guns to bear more effectively on the town in case it might be necessary to shell it, and meanwhile trained his Maxims on the detachment of the Boers attacking the station, which was held by about a hundred of the advanced guard under cover of the machine guns in the trucks.

The Boers who had ridden into Germistown were under the command of Captain Sarel Eloff, President Kruger's grandson—who, it will be remembered, had been the first to ride out to meet Jameson and his raiders and who had also been one of the principal witnesses at the celebrated trial.

Although a youth of little more than twenty, he was one of the smartest officers in the service of the Republic; tall big-boned and handsome, though his good looks were of a somewhat saturnine sort, strong as a horse and as brave as a bulldog—a straight-shooting, hard-riding specimen of the best kind of Boer that has so far been evolved.

Since his return from England he had been in charge of the Police of the Krügersdorp District, and as soon as Commandant Schutte's men had seen that matters in Johannesburg were going to be really serious, about fifty of them had galloped out of the town over the mines towards Roodepoort, where Captain Eloff happened to be just then, and gave him the news that the English in Johannesburg had risen; that the Kaffirs were loose; and that the town was being shelled.

Captain Eloff reasoned rapidly and, from his point of view, correctly that plenty of men could be brought from Pretoria to deal with any riots if the batteries failed to overawe the rioters, and that, even if they could fight their way out of the town, the only possible chance of escape lay along the Natal line.

He called his men out of the station and re-embarked them on the trains.

He had, therefore, dispatched every available man hither and thither through his district to summon the burghers out at once and tell them to concentrate at Germistown at the earliest possible moment, and this they had done with the wonderful celerity of preparation and movement, which

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is one of the most formidable of the Boers' fighting qualifications. As soon as they saw that help had come in force, Captain Mellish did the very thing he ought to have done under the circumstances.

He called his men out of the station, re-embarked them in the trucks, and started off down the line to head off the other party of Boers. He saw that his first duty was to keep the line clear and that his second was to stop the news getting to Heidelberg.

When the Boers saw his men scrambling back into the truck they uttered a loud shout of triumph, and, before their clear-sighted commander could stop them, made a rush for the abandoned station.

The next instant the two seven-pounders on Captain James's train, one loaded with shrapnel and the other with common shell, opened fire on the telegraph office, while the Maxims began to spread their storms of bullets along the line in both directions and through the streets of the town. The station buildings were ablaze within a few minutes, the telegraph office was a wreck, and all danger of communication was at an end so far as Germiston was concerned.

As soon as he saw that this had been accomplished, Captain James ran his train ahead out of the way of the sparks that were beginning to fly about from the burning buildings. Captain Eloff, on his side, saw that nothing could now be done to save the situation. There was no means of telegraphing either up or down for help, and the Free State line had been wrecked by the advance guard of the Johannesburgers before he got to the junction. He therefore called his men out and made a determined effort to pull up the rails behind the second train in case any more might be coming along. Here he was right again, but time was against him.

Before his men had got to work "No. 2" came thundering down the line, shaking the earth under its enormous weight. It rushed through the burning station at a speed of over thirty miles an hour, and as it came on the Maxims on the forward trucks opened fire on either side. Two of the Boers were caught on the line and mangled out of all human likeness under the wheels of the engine. The rest scampered away from the metals as fast as their legs would carry them.

A score or so of them went down under the Maxim bullets, and the others halted a couple of hundred yards off and poured a vicious but almost harmless volley into the train as it swept past. The next minute it was out of range, but now the two bodies of the Johannesburg Horse came tearing through the town each side of the line at full gallop to get their share of the sport.

This was much more in the Boers' line than fighting trains. Every man pulled up and dismounted where he stood, the next minute the deadly rifles began to crack all round the advancing columns, and saddle after saddle was emptied, and horse after horse, mortally wounded, came crashing with his rider to the earth.

Captains Nesbitt and Maclure were struck by the same idea at the same moment. By voice and gesture they told their troops to scatter, and led them off from the line at a gallop. Then they swung round at about half a mile from the railway. As they did so "No 3" came spinning down the line in the midst of a storm of smoke and flame from the machine-guns and ran clean through a body of the Boers who had ridden in to take possession of the line.

This was altogether too much for the worthy burghers. This was the fourth train, loaded with armed men and vomiting death and destruction on all sides of it, that had come, apparently from nowhere, to destroy them.

"*Allemachtig!*" they cried, staring blankly at each other "This is the British army that has come up from Delagoa. They say there are thousands of them. There are not enough of us, let us go!"

And they went, at least as many of them as could get away, as fast as their horses could carry them, to await a more favourable opportunity of fighting the Rooineks.

(To be continued.)

£250 * *

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Fill in the coupon below.
Send it in to us as soon as you like.
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If two competitors name the exact day the money will go to the one who gives the correct hour of that day. If two or more give the correct day and hour the £250 in full will go to him whose coupon we received bearing the earliest date of sending in. Pretoria time, which is about an hour and three quarters in advance of English time, must be stated.

The Editor's decision must be final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding.

The Editor reserves the right to close this competition at a day's notice.

Address all envelopes to "War Editor," Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Pretoria Coupon, S.S. | *April 28, 1900.*

Name.....

Address.....

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Day..... *Hour*.....
(Pretoria Time.)

We shall take it that competitors mean the year 1900 unless they state otherwise.

This notice and coupon also appears every week in the ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY NEWS, HOME NOTES, THE SUNDAY READER, PEARSON'S WEEKLY, and the BIG BUDGET.

Readers of SHORT STORIES may enter with this Coupon.

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "Athelstone Ford," by Allen Upward, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. F. W. Finch, of 11, Avon Terrace, Leicester Causeway, Coventry. Attempts for this week's prize may deal with ANY SUBJECT and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, April 30th. Post-cards only, please.

The Difference.

A FEW evenings ago a small party of townsmen were assembled in an hotel smoke-room, discussing the all-absorbing question of the war, when one of them asked:

"What is the difference between the British soldiers at Bloemfontein and the unfortunate fellows who are prisoners at Pretoria?"

After several attempts were made unsuccessfully to solve the conundrum, they gave it up.

"Well, I will explain the difference," said the questioner. "The British soldiers at Bloemfontein are absent-minded beggars, while those at Pretoria are absent beggars minded."

F. W. F.

Invitations Ceased.

A FAMOUS pianist was once invited to dinner by a wealthy man, who was the owner of a large boot factory, and had been a shoemaker in his time.

After the repast the musician was requested to play something, and he consented.

Not long afterwards the pianist invited the manufacturer, and after dinner handed him a pair of old boots.

"What am I to do with these?" asked the rich man in astonishment.

With a genial smile, the musician replied:

"Why, the other day you asked me to play a little music for you, and now I ask you to mend these boots for me. Each to his trade, you know."

E. M.

Alarming.

NOT only the horses of the Mexicans, but whatever property belonging to them you admire is yours. If you express a sentiment of approbation of anything, the owner at once says: "Señor, it is yours"; but he simply intends something flattering, and are therefore, not expected to accept anything that is offered to you.

An amusing story is told of an English official, which illustrates how this national courtesy often provokes embarrassment. The gentleman was walking in the park, when he met a nurse girl with a bright-eyed baby. Being fond of children, he stopped to admire the little one, and asked whose child it was.

"Señor, it is your own," replied the nurse with a curtsy.

The official beat a hasty retreat.

W. H.

Not a Grammarian.

To a waiter belongs the proud distinction of uttering what is probably the most ungrammatical sentence ever evolved from the brain of illiterate man. One afternoon an old man took his seat at the table and gave his usual order to a newly employed knight of the napkin.

"Waiter," he said, as the dishes were put before him, "this beef isn't sufficiently underdone."

With a smile of contempt the servitor bore the viands back to the kitchen window and returned a moment later without having changed them.

"I'm very sorry, sir," he said, "but we ain't got no beef what's no underdoner!"

E. P.

Scathing.

A MEMBER of a fashionable club in London lost his umbrella. Being resolved to draw attention to the matter in an effective manner, he caused this notice to be put up in the hall:

"The nobleman who took away an umbrella not his own on such a date is requested to return it."

The committee took offence at this statement, and summoned the member who had made it before them.

"Why, sir," they inquired, "should you have supposed that a nobleman had taken your umbrella?"

"Well," replied the member, "the first article in the club rules says that 'This club is to be composed of noblemen and gentlemen,' and since the person who stole my umbrella could not have been a gentleman, he must have been a nobleman."

W. S. T.

He Wanted a Nice Picture.

A LOCAL photographer tells a story of a young man who came into the studio one day and asked nervously if he might have a little conversation with him.

The visitor was painfully ugly, and, after some awkward blushing and indefinite allusions, he asked the artist if he supposed he had among his samples a picture of any young man who looked like him, but was better-looking.

"What do you mean, young man?" asked the photographer.

"Well," replied he, making a clean breast of it, "I am just engaged to be married. The young lady lives down in Devonshire. She is going home to-morrow. She says she thinks I'm so good she doesn't mind my being homely, but she wants a good-looking picture to take home with her to show the girls."

H. B.

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Properly Sold.

A boy on one of the stations of the Metropolitan Railway, finding the carriages all full up, opened one of the doors and shouted out loudly:

"This train isn't going!"

All the occupants arose and got out, amongst them an old gent with a wooden leg. The boy then jumped into the coveted seat in the corner.

Presently the guard came along, and they all rushed back again, and in the midst of the general indignation he was asked:

"Why did you say this train wasn't going?"

"Well, it wasn't then," replied the boy with a grin, "but it is now!" D. L.

The Two Toasts.

Would-be wits are apt sometimes to have the tables turned upon them.

At a dinner in honour of a gentleman named Nick Denton, one of the staff of a certain railway, his friend, Jack Wallace, entrusted with the toast of the evening, proposed it thus:

"The two Nicks—Old Nick and Nick Denton."

Denton rose to respond, saying he appreciated the honour conferred upon him by connecting him with Mr. Wallace's most intimate friend, and scarcely knew how to return the compliment; but as one good turn deserves another, he would give:

"The two Jacks—Jack Wallace and Jackass!"

W. L.

Is It Likely?

In the course of a recent passage of an ocean greyhound across the Atlantic, two of her passengers, an American and an Englishman, were conversing one day upon sporting subjects.

A casual mention of Hurlingham—the scene of the great pigeon-shooting matches—afforded the American an opportunity for stating that on one particular occasion he had shot nine hundred and ninety-nine pigeons running.

Upon his interlocutor observing that "he might just as well have said a thousand while he was about it," he rejoined:

"Certainly not; I should scarcely tell a lie for the sake of a single pigeon!" A. R. T.

Relief at Last.

The long-suffering man was trying to read, when, with a crash and a roar, the train left the rails. Down, down, down it went. The seat in which the long-suffering man sat shut up like a knife and caught him in its tenacious embrace; another seat rose up and smote him in the side. Two trunks flung themselves upon his breast, and the luggage-rack slid down and poked him in the back. Then all was silent.

The long-suffering man tried to move. One foot, then the other, was found embedded in the *débris*; his arms were securely pinioned by the wreckage. It was dark, and warm, and still.

The long-suffering man nestled his cheek down on the cool surface of a window and heaved a sigh of relief.

"At last," he murmured, "at last those two maniacs in front of me have stopped talking golf."

And a blessed silence reigned.

W. R. S.

Good Enough to Pawn.

The 11th Hussars had arrived in Dublin one day, and their notoriety made them a great attraction.

After a levée at the castle, one of their officers was walking down Sackville Street one beautiful sunny afternoon in the month of July, in his full dress, and he was met by two Irishmen fresh from the interior of the country.

Quite staggered by the glittering and gorgeous apparition clanking towards them, they riveted their eyes on the blazing gold and blue figure, and, with a wondering gaze, the one exclaimed to the other, with a sharp nudge in the ribs, and a look of exquisite fun:

"Begorra, shouldn't I like to pawn him!"

W. B. T.

The Lesser of Two Evils.

A badly-wounded soldier, at present in a South African hospital, objected to his doctor on the ground that he was too young.

"He ain't got a hair on his face,' grumbled Tommy. "I don't want no kids messin' about wi' me."

"Very well, then; I will fetch Dr. Blank to you," said the nurse, mentioning a surgeon who was noted for his drastic methods of treatment.

"The old feller who's so fond o' slashin' arms an' legs off?" queried Tommy anxiously.

"That's the man," replied the nurse.

"Ah, well, I think we'll gi'e t' young 'un a chance," said the soldier, on reflection. "He's nobbut a beginner, an' one or two fingers should satisfy him!"

H. G. A. R.

He Would be Obeyed.

A company of a British regiment was once sent in time of peace on some simple duty to a remote village in Ireland, and left there for several weeks, being quite separated from its usual source of supplies.

During this period some general orders applicable more especially to men in barracks were sent to the commander of the company.

One clause of the orders was to the effect that all the men in the command should change their shirts twice a week.

The captain gave orders to the orderly sergeant to see this command put into execution.

"But, captain," said the sergeant, "there's only a shirt apiece to every man in the company! How can they——"

"Silence!" roared the captain; "orders are orders! Let the men change their shirts with one another."

So the sergeant saw to it that so long as the company remained in the place, on every Sunday and Wednesday mornings the soldiers "swapped" shirts with one another. F. F.

Pearson's Great Coloured War Sheet,

In which various incidents of the War in South Africa are depicted, is a large picture, 40in. by 30in., beautifully printed in many colours. The picture is on sale everywhere, price One Shilling, or it can be obtained from the office of this paper, securely packed in tube, post free for 1s. 4d. Orders should be placed at once, as only a limited number have been printed. The picture is also sold mounted on cloth and rollers, and varnished, at 4s. 6d. A small reproduction of the picture is given on page 542.

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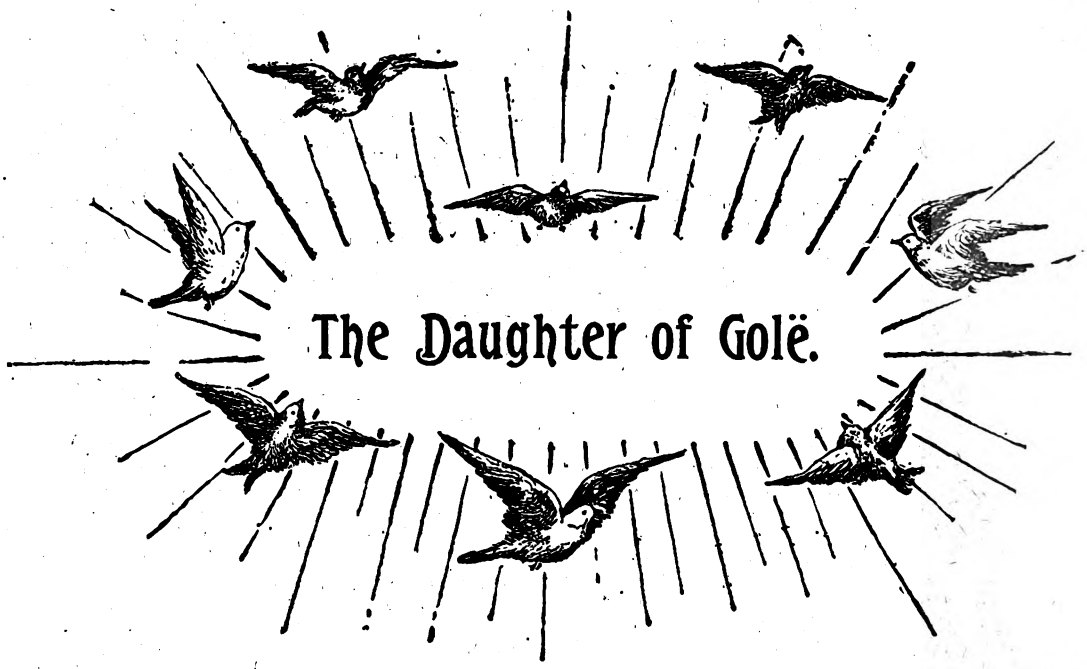

The Daughter of Golë.

In descending the path, Jean Fait Tout pointed out to me, toward the shore, a ruin, gray and dismantled, but still menacing. "Behold the tower of Duard," he said; "and I am going to relate to you, just as I promised, the story of the daughter of Goël. Recall, on your side, the barbarous atrocious custom our lords had of preserving their walls from all destruction by burying in them, alive, a young maiden still a virgin.

"Sir Ronald, mysteriously, had not allowed any but laborers from beyond the sea to work on that tower, although old Goël, the best mason of the country, dwelt in a hut very near by.

"But Goël had a daughter, Phanette, as delicate, pretty, and graceful as a doe, whom Sir Ronald, a base scoundrel, pursued in the meadow, on the beach, behind the hedges, everywhere.

"The poor little one, thanks to her agility, escaped from the lord, but by a miracle; and after the chase, fell on the paternal threshold, trembling and breathless, like a hind at bay.

"Upon which Goël, although only a vassal, carried his grievances before the Duke of Bretagne. Sir Ronald was threatened with excommunication if he did not amend. The lord ceased then to torment Phanette, but he cherished a furious rancour against the mason; not only did he no longer employ him at his works, but he forbade everyone to give him employment.

"One evening, a short time after that, the English masons, having finished the tower, had crossed the sea again. Goël and his wife awaited beside the cold hearth the return of Phanette, who had gone to the village to sell their last clothes.

"They watched by the light of a smoky lamp, which burned before the image of St. Cado. Both were absorbed in their sad thoughts, when someone knocked at the door. Two strangers appeared. With some mystery, they asked if Goël would consent to accompany them to a few miles from the village, and if he would be able to build a wall with his eyes bandaged. At the same time they placed a purse full of gold on the table. The offer did not surprise Goël, because the lords of those times contrived a thousand hiding places, pits, niches and secret caves, wherein to put their riches in safety. Nevertheless he hesitated, imagining foolishly that without their full beards and turned down hats, he could perhaps recognize, in these two strangers, valets or cavaliers of Sir Ronald. But his wife, already putting the purse in the trunk, exclaimed:

"'Go, my man, and return quickly. Phanette will then have come home, and we will all three make a reckoning of our fortune, forming a thousand fine projects for the future.'

"That decided Goël. Hardly was he outside, when the two strangers fastened the bandage firmly over his eyes, and made him swear in the name of St. Cado and under menace of death that he would not remove it himself, whatever might be the strange things that he might hear.

"A superfluous oath, because the broad bandage not only closed his eyes, but also his ears.

"Each of the men then took one of his hands and led him along. By the wind which blew on the nape of his neck, Goël understood that they went away from the shore to enter the valley; but after a hundred turns and windings, which fatigued him and made him lose his bearings, he felt the wind strike him in the face. By that and certain vague indefinable sensations it seemed to him that he was led again towards the village.

"After a new course, the blowing of the wind ceased abruptly, and he felt himself no longer walking on the ground, but on stones; then he stumbled and had to climb steps. Without moving his lips he counted twenty-seven. After this, his two guides made him touch on the right some cut stones and on the left his trowel and mortar; and, in front of him, a very low wall that it was necessary to build up, until the hiding place in it was covered.

"Having his hands free and not feeling anyone near

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him, Goël set himself to work, putting the stones one over the other in just apposition, plastering the interstices, cementing them in such an active and expert fashion that the wall rose quickly. He imagined at first that someone, with a poignard raised over his breast, watched him, awaiting the least movement he made to remove the bandage which rendered him blind and deaf.

"But soon in that profound silence, his thoughts grew calmer and he arrived at the conclusion that he worked all alone in a dark parlour. In his freer movements, he could, by furtive touches, notice that the niche he was closing up grew narrower above into a pointed arch.

"It could have held a statue of natural size and it resembled no other hiding place of treasure. This reflection gave him the desire to stretch out his arm, to touch the gold or the jewels of inestimable value.

"In spite of his danger, he advanced a hand and drew it back quickly, amazed at feeling the texture of cloth instead of the cold contact of gold. Were these, then, precious garments that he was hiding?

"Impunity emboldened him, and a little while after he advanced the hand further, and touched something like the falling folds of a dress, still warm, as if it had only just been removed. Goël, although more anxious, did not stop working.

"The wall already was at the height of his waist, when a drop of water, oozing, doubtlessly, from the wall, fell upon his hand. The little drop was not cold, as it ought to be from water filtered through granite, but warm—almost burning. Instinctively and slyly Goël carried this drop of water to his lips and found it as bitter as a tear. Then other drops fell more abundantly, more burning, on his fevered fingers. He was more and more troubled and yet the wall rose, rose incessantly.

"At one time, under the stuff that he touched, he thought he felt a living warmth, a warmth of flesh, and in the frightful silence before him, at the height of his heart, another heart beating in a desperate fashion. His whole body shuddered, a cold perspiration trickled from his forehead, and nevertheless, faithful to his oath, he placed a large stone against this living thing, which beat like a heart, cemented it and then put others over it.

"Then the little hot drops ceased to fall and he reached the pointed arch at last, when his trowel and fingers became entangled with some light threads, which broke as easily as delicate strands of silk. Adroitly, quickly, Goël rolled a few of these threads around one of his fingers and finished cementing the surface of the arch and of the wall. Then worn out with fatigue and emotion, he dropped his tools and, by an old habit, mechanically passed his hand flatly over the stones, yet moist and fresh, in order to reassure himself that they were united and smooth.

"But at the height of his own breast he felt under his palm, through the thickness of the wall, the same warmth of life, the same wild and terrible beating of a heart in agony. This time the impression was so vivid, so real, that overcome by his feelings, Goël uttered a moan of distress and fell backwards.

"He did not come to himself until long afterwards, aroused by the strong breeze blowing from the sea. His first movement was to tear off the bandage. He found himself lying on the pebbles of the deserted shore, late in the night.

"From a great distance away, by its narrow loophole lighted in red, the tower of Duard seemed to watch him, darting its eye of blood upon him across the mist.

"Staggering still and haunted by a nightmare, Goël regained his hut. On seeing him enter, his wife, who still watched by the light of her smoky lamp, gave a cry of joy.

"But he let himself fall on a bench, moaning:

"'Phanette! Where is Phanette?'

"His wife very pale, had to confess that Phanette had not yet returned.

"At twilight some of Sir Ronald's men had been seen prowling in the meadows of Joburg. The terrified shepherds, hearing a desperate cry from the valley below, which was already quite in darkness, had peered over the top of the rocks, but had seen nothing. Goël asked in a voice trembling with anxiety:

"'Wife, do you know the number of steps one has to climb to reach the door of the tower of Duard?'

"'One counts twenty-seven steps,' answered his wife.

"Goël, in anguish, joined his trembling hands, and in desperation raised them toward the image of St. Cado, which the little smoky lamp lighted.

"On her side the woman uttered a cry:

"'Oh, Goël, Goël; what do I see twined around your finger and shining like gold. One would say they were hairs from the head of our Phanette!'

"Then Goël, sinking against the table, his head in his arms, sobbed:

"'Misfortune has come upon us, O wife; I have buried our child alive in the granite tower!'"

CHARLES FOLEY.

"I MEANT to have told you of that hole," said a host to a friend who had fallen into a pit in his garden.

"No matter," said the friend, "I've found it."

BILL: "I see the clock dealer down the street is selling out."

JILL: "Yes; he told me his business was all run down."

Bill: "And now he proposes to wind it up?"

ETHEL: "Jack was kissing me last night, when papa walked into the drawing-room."

Gracie: "What did he say?"

"He said: 'Sir, this is outrageous!'"

"And Jack?"

"Jack said: 'Yes, isn't it? Kindly oblige me by knocking before you enter the next time.'"

"CHARLEY dear," said young Mrs. Torkins, "the baby is trying to talk again. It's wonderful how he takes after you!"

"What was he talking about?"

"I think it must have been politics. He started very calmly, but in a few minutes he was as angry and red in the face as he could be."

MRS. JENKINS was in the habit of repeating "I say," to almost every sentence she gave utterance.

On one occasion she rang the bell for her footman, and on his entering, she said:

"I say, James, I have been to Mrs. Thompson's, and heard say, that you said that I am in the habit of saying 'I say' to every word I say. Now if I do say 'I say' to every word I say, it does not become you to say that I say 'I say' to every word I say, James."

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The Little Black Imps.

In Berlin the name of Max Müller had been of some account. He was, to begin with, a Müller, which meant much.

As a matter of course, he was an officer in the army—his sisters had starved themselves for his commission and maintenance—and he was handsome, even for a German officer.

Unfortunately for him, he sang the love songs of his country, and they are quite the most moving love songs in the world. They move the singers as well as the listeners. They moved Müller, and on one night in particular when he was bidden to the house of a certain titled lady, he was so lifted out of himself by the charm of his music that he proposed to an English girl who was present, and to his startled dismay was accepted.

It was a misfortune, for he was not in sympathy with the English point of view, he did not like the insistence and arrogance of English women, and he had quite made up his mind to marry a senseless and well-born little *fräulein* who did net work and went to *kaffee klatsches*.

He almost loved her, she was so nondescript, and would be well content to make a harmless background of herself for his benefit.

Moreover, in spite of all his vanity he was rather soft-hearted, and it hurt him to think how many tears would bedew those soft blue eyes when she heard of his engagement to the English girl.

The English girl had, moreover, been known to do things which were shocking. She had gone shopping about the streets of Berlin unaccompanied, she had once used slang before a Weimar professor of philosophy, and she had been heard to say that she did not like the shape of the Emperor's nose, and it was said she made some serious mistakes in her interpretation of the Fifth Symphony.

Yet he married her. And they came to England.

"It is just as well," said his friends sadly. "Really, you know, it is all over with poor Max."

They felt that he was as good as dead.

It was dull in England. Well, London wasn't so bad, perhaps, but the other towns—bah! There wasn't a true city among them. It didn't count for a man to be anybody. No one paid any attention to Max because he was a Müller. It made him bitter. He had a little summer house built at the back of the villa where they lived, and smoked his pipe there and dreamed of Berlin. Also he planted some flowers and some little trees. He liked these and paid much attention to them. He studied a good deal—military tactics and botany. But he neglected to provide the daily bread. No one could blame him for it. It was an oversight on his part. His wife gave music lessons—private lessons and class lessons—and sometimes performed at concerts.

In course of the long and busy years four children were born to Müller, but still the burden of the bread-winning devolved upon madame. She never complained. It was the greatest pleasure in the world for her to return home and find the Baron sitting there. She never saw a man so handsome. And he was always kind.

He was willing—but not eager—to work. Time was apt to hang heavily on his hands. And so it became his habit to amuse himself in a peculiar way—namely, by the making of little black imps. He made them on anything that chanced to be handy—an envelope, a scrap of paper, a playing card, or a book mark.

He represented them in every imaginable antic. He gave them a thousand subtle individualities. His mind appeared to be beset by them.

Many of his acquaintances had wondered in the course of their intercourse with him what it was that filled that large, handsome head. Now they seemed to be finding out.

The little inky imps trooped out of his cranium in such numbers that they threatened to leave it quite void and empty.

The children were growing up, and children cannot do that, no matter how unobstrusive they endeavour to be, without costing someone something.

These children developed talents, and in a utilitarian age talents cannot be allowed to go to waste. Madam Müller considered it incumbent upon her to see that one studied dramatic expression, and another the violin, and another wood-carving, and another modelling in clay, besides all of the regulation studies.

She brought a great circle of friends about her, who adored her bohemian evenings and who considered the Baron one of the most interesting gentlemen they had ever met.

The Baron did not consider himself interesting. He was bored with himself.

He wondered if time would never pass in England—and drew little black imps while he was waiting to find out.

Among the many pleasing and heterodox friends who visited the Müllers was a newspaper man of a whimsical turn of mind. He had been the recipient on a certain occasion of a pack of playing cards in which each club spade, heart or diamond was represented by scarlet or black imps, and the design upon the backs of the cards was a writhing, twisting inferno of the same grotesque little creatures.

He looked at these long and appreciatively, did the newspaper man, and he was seized with an idea. This idea was the outcome of his observations. He had noticed that there was a look of extreme weariness in the eyes of the amiable Madame Müller, and that she walked more slowly than she used, and her selections at the piano, which had once been noted for their length,

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were now brief and lacking in spirit. In short, the brave spirit of Madame Müller drooped under many burdens.

So the newspaper man entered upon the making of a collection, assisted by the energetic and talented children of the Baron. Little black imps were gathered from every part of the house, heads were torn from letters that the fascinating imps might be preserved, leaves were rent from books, and even a pocket handkerchief done in a procession of dancing imps, in indelible ink, was taken in charge.

The practical friend sent these to a certain much-illustrated comic weekly and anxiously awaited the results. The family was of the opinion that there would be no results. The Baron was in a state of peaceful ignorance.

But the results were almost dramatic. The comic weekly was amused—and it is not easy to amuse a comic weekly. It wanted a series, indefinitely continued, of little black imps illustrating current events.

The officious friend carried the good news to Baron von Müller.

"Sir!" stormed the Baron. "You have exceeded your privileges. You have made me ridiculous. I am no clown to fillip and kick while the people laugh! Will you have the great goodness to recall these personal possessions of mine from the stranger to whom you have confided them?"

The newspaper man was obdurate.

"You will be distinguished in a few minutes," he said. "I'm going to set my alarm clock so I can wake up at the proper moment and see the fun. No, I'll not write for the imps. I've already sold part of them. The cheque will reach you in a few days. And you must be about those illustrations of current happenings. When they want a thing on a paper they want it. They don't care to wait."

"Am I to be at the beck and call of these men whom I have never seen?"

"It is not necessary to see them in order to be at their beck and call."

The Baron considered all Englishmen stupid, but he regarded this one as particularly so. Especially when he found that his family was leagued with the perverse man to insist upon the making of the little imps.

Under protest, and with frequent lamentings that he would be made ridiculous, the Baron worked on.

The first few days were drudgery, but the second week saw him tolerant, the third week found him interested, and at the end of a month he was enthusiastic. The joy of work—individual, creative work—was an emotion he had only just discovered. And when the monetary results became appreciable he grew almost purse-proud.

He began to gather ideas about the propriety of women working, and finally he commanded his wife to cease her money-earning. With a great show of wifely submission Madame Müller obeyed.

She rested at last, after the day's heat and burden, and a smiling German gentleman, lord of his house and dictator over his dominions, made adorable little black imps in the solitude of his study.

W. F. Wikstone.

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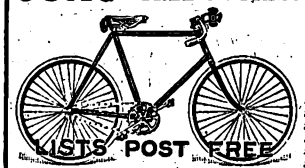

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THE PAPER FOR THE TEA TABLE.

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The Brain Gymnasium.

In these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, Short Stories, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by first post on Monday, May 7th, 1900.

No. 100.

When can four be less than three?

No. 101.

If you write . . . . . at . . . . . do not . . . . . the . . . . .

Complete this sentence by inserting five words, each containing the same five letters.

No. 102.

My initials will form the name of a well-known mountain:

CONSEQUENCE, TIDY, COMMAND, PALE, SILLY, EQUIPMENT, FRESH.

No. 103.

My FIRST we all possess, 'tis necessary quite.
Some prize it with a loving care; some look on it with spite;
Some feebly FIRST their hate of FIRST;
Some FIRST for your delight.

How oft we find some cherished thing—
Some worshipped thing we thought divine—
Is unresponsive to the ring;
'Tis SECOND, sans auriferous shine.

My WHOLE reversed is a source of joy
To many a man and little boy;
And not reversed, it is a sight,
When well applied, all dazzling white.

No. 104.

The centrals of the names of the following, when properly arranged, will give the name of an English statesman:

"A smoke."
"At present."
"A countryman."
"A trifle."
"Traders."
"A cave."
"Abolish."

No. 105.

Form a word-square with the equivalents of the following:

"A FELLOW," "IN THIS PLACE," "A SPACE," "A FRUIT."

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Nos. 76 to 81.

The prize of £2 has been awarded this week to Mr. W. Tapley, of 10 Gregory Street, Loughborough, Leicestershire, whose solution was the first correct one dealt with.

Each of the following has been awarded a copy of "Guilty Gold," by Headon Hill:

J. W. Johnson, 106 Wistaston Road, Crewe.
G. F. Hill, 12 Medlicott Road, Sparkbrook, Birmingham.
W. T. Cook, 29 Roding Road, Homerton, N.E.
A. Royle, 9 Glaybury Road, West Kensington.
S. J. Bremer, 27 Douglas Road, Canonbury, N.
A. Edwards, 12 Meredith Street, E.C.
W. J. Barter, 38 Douglas Street, Cork.
W. Gyde, The Barracks, Warley, Essex.
J. B. Johnson, 153 Walthall Street, Crewe.
H. Chadwick, 12 Meredith Street, Clerkenwell, E.C.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES.

Nos. 82 to 87.

No. 82. MUM-MY.

No. 83.
R U S T L E
L U S T R E
S U T L E R
U L S T E R
R E S U L T

No. 84.
ME C CA
ENG L AND
KIMB E RLEY
AME R ICA
NEW Y ORK.

No. 85.
B T A P I A T P
B I R M I N G H A M
R A E N T U E R
D P N T O E M T

No. 86. STAFFORD. *Satire, affable, flog, riddle.*

No. 87.
G L U M
L O N E
U N I T
M E T E

THE SUNDAY READER, Pearson's religious weekly, published on Wednesday, price 1d. weekly, is now running a grand series of articles entitled "Robbers of the Fatherless and Widows," being a complete exposé of the methods of bogus company promoters. *THE SUNDAY READER* is the most enterprising religious paper of the age; lose no time in getting a copy. If your agent has not got it, apply to the Editor, *THE SUNDAY READER*, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and a copy will be supplied.

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Quarter-page " "	2 10 0
Eighth-page " "	1 5 0
Front page, whole " "	12 10 0
" half	6 5 0

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And is sold by all leading Chemists in Packets of 18 Doses, 1s.

To ANYONE HAVING THE LEAST DIFFICULTY, it will be sent post free for 12 Stamps by "KAPUTINE Ltd.," Huddersfield; or, on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope, A. M. Kaputine, Huddersfield, you will receive a free sample.

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GIGANTIC SPRING SALE, 1900.

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(as Illustration).

Covered with Oriental Reversible Soft Satcen with double border. Size 54in. by 60in. These Quilts are offered below anything in the Wholesale Trade, and cause the greatest consternation to the buyer, wondering how they can be produced for the money.

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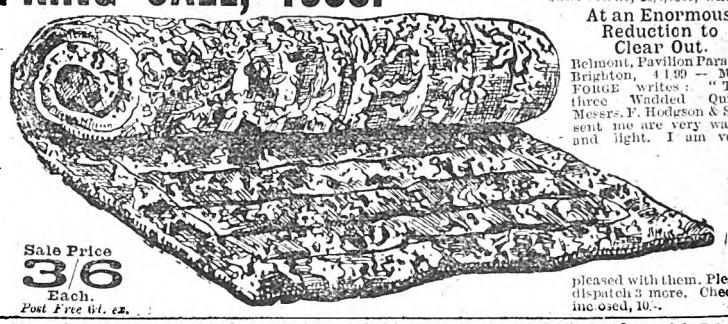

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In REVERSIBLE RICH TURKEY PATTERNS, measuring 6ft. long, and 3ft. wide. These HEARTHRUGS have gained a world-wide reputation for MAGNIFICENCE, CHEAPNESS, and UTILITY, having no equal. Registered New Designs, and considered Works of Art. Thousands of Repeat Orders and Testimonials received, giving the highest satisfaction. **SPECIAL OFFER.—Three for 5/9; Six for 11/3; Twelve for 22/-**

The "Queen's Royal" Household Carpets and Hearthrugs are patronised by Royalty, Nobility, and Clergy from all parts of the Empire.

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Trade Mark on all Goods. Beware of Imitations.

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6 ft. by 9 ft.	... ... 7/6	REDUCED SALE PRICE.	10½ ft. by 12 ft.	... ... 18/-
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Octagon Villa, The Lizard, R.S.O., 15/8/98.—J. CARWARDINE, Esq., writes: "I am very pleased with the Carpet you sent me. I have saved 50 per cent. by giving you the order. I paid half as much again to a local tradesman for Carpets the same quality a year ago. I have never been so pleased of any former purchase."

Colossal Sale of Rich Velvet Pile Real *Sale Price*

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In Rich Oriental and Indian Art Designs, measuring 6ft. by 3ft., which for price, real value, weight and richness of manufacture will be found unapproachable.

SPECIAL OFFER.—3 Rugs, 16/-; 6 for 31/-

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The Right Honourable The VISCOUNTESS MELVILLE writes: "I am very pleased with the 'Royal' Velvet Hearthrugs to hand, and would like four more Hearthrugs. Her ladyship would also like two Velvet Carpets at 39/-, one ditto at 60/6 to match them. Cheque £8 14s. inclosed."

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9 ft. by 10½ ft.	... 33/-		12 ft. by 18 ft.	... 77/-

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To Readers of "Short Stories," 28/4/1900, on receipt of Postal Order or Stamps, value

4/6

(Regd.) We will send you THE LARGEST GENUINE REVERSIBLE CARPET in BRUSSELS PATTERN WITH RUG ever sold at the price, direct from the Looms to any address on receipt of amount. Suitable for drawing-room, dining-room, bedroom, etc., bordered and woven in Brussels patterns, as an advertisement for our goods, thus saving any middle profit. Remember these are woven, and are made of a material almost equal to wool. Thousands of these Carpets have been already sold at double these prices.

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Size.	Each.		Size.	Each.
6ft. by 6ft.	2/11	REDUCED SALE PRICE.	10½ft. by 12ft.	11/6
6ft. by 7½ft.	3/11		9ft. by 15ft.	12/6
6ft. by 9ft.	4/9		12ft. by 12ft.	12/9
7½ft. by 9ft.	5/11		12ft. by 13½ft.	14/6
9ft. by 9ft.	7/6		12ft. by 15ft.	15/9
9ft. by 10½ft.	8/6		12ft. by 18ft.	19/6
9ft. by 12ft.	9/6		12ft. by 21ft.	22/6

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1 Magnificently Rich Cream-Coloured Curly Sheepskin Hearthrug, average size 6 feet by 3 feet, perfection in quality.

1 Beautiful Reversible Art Crimson Plush Bed Rug, Sofa Cover, or Table Cover, double warp, very heavy, size 50 inches by 78 inches.

2 Beautiful Silver Goatskin Door Mats, lined woollen cloth throughout, pinked edges, best finish, ornamental to any room.

1 Elegant Hair Brush, highly finished, with mirror back.

THE LOT 10/6

Postage 9d. extra

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Providing *SHORT STORIES* Coupon, 28/4/1900, is quoted, a FREE GIFT will be enclosed—a very handsome Electro Silver Plated "OWL" PEPPER STAND with coloured eyes and gilt feet. Cash returned if not satisfied. (Signed) F. HODGSON & SON.

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SHORT STORIES

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN

No. 592. FOR WEEK ENDING MAY 5TH, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

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A FULL DRESS LENGTH of either cloth (6yd. 52in. wide) for carriage 8d. extra. Any length cut at **1/3** the yard. **7/6**

COLOURS: Black, Navy, Brown, Myrtle, Fawn, Khaki, Grey, and Royal Blue.

SIZES IN STOCK of Ladies' Costumes are 34, 36, 38 in. round bust (under arms); waists, 24, 26, and 28 in.; Skirts being 38, 40, 42 in long in front. Any other size made to measure for 1/6 extra.

MOURNING ORDERS executed at one day's notice.

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Well cut! made!! and finished!!! The Coat has the latest shaped American Collar, tight-fitting back and loose front, fastening with barrel buttons, but may be worn open or closed. The Skirt is the latest full shape, and the complete Costume is only **10/6**; Carriage, 6d. extra. Skirt alone, **5/6**; carriage 5d. extra.

Also supplied in fashionable strong Khaki Drill for **13/6**, carriage, 6d.

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Rich variety in all the latest weaves and colourings.

A large box of Patterns sent post free, together with the New SUMMER FASHION CATALOGUE of Costumes, Mantles, Millinery, Window Curtains, &c.

Please mention SHORT STORIES when ordering.

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FRANCIS RAVENSCROFT, *Manager.*

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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SHORT STORIES

No. 952.] For the Week Ending May 5th, 1900. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

A MODERN DON JUAN.

"No, I don't exactly hate him—and yet, I do. It was a mean, shabby trick to play on any fellow. 'Pon my word, some men are as spiteful as girls!" soliloquised John Heathcote as he shook his head at a letter he had just received, which contained the news that he was refused the membership of a club, and although the source was not stated, he knew by whom the ball had been set rolling that had caused his name to be scratched off the members' list.

"H'm," he continued, as he lit a cigarette. "Fancy bearing a grudge all these years. Why, we were boys together, when little Effie Mathews left him for me. Oh, how wild he was! It wasn't my fault after all, was it?" and he appealed to the miniature of a fair-haired girl hanging over his mantelpiece.

The fair-haired girl was now the wife of a country curate and overseer of the fortnightly Sewing Bee, but she had been Effie Mathews when John painted the miniature of her, for though by profession a young officer in Her Majesty's Navy, he had a turn for art, which took the form of miniature painting.

John Heathcote long ago nicknamed Don Juan on account of his numerous *amours*, was one who was either too lazy or too careless to quarrel with destiny.

"What must be, must be," he used always to say. If he fell in love with every pretty face he met, was it his fault? If the owners of the said pretty faces, and the owners of plain ones also, fell in love with him, was it his fault? Wherever he went—and he went to a good many places—it was the same.

If Don Juan lived for more than a month in any one spot of the globe there were tears and lamentations on one side and vows of undying constancy on the other. And yet he was only twenty, and most of the girls, whose letters filled his desk and whose photographs his rooms, were older than himself. It was therefore their faults—not his. At least so his lady friends said, his male aquaintances, and their name was legion, for Juan was bound to make friends wherever he went, were of the opinion that he was "a jolly good sort, but an abomination where the girls were."

He attracted them like jam attracts the flies, and let it be understood, they attracted him like flowers allure a butterfly.

He was the son of a lord—that attracted some.

He was well off—that attracted more.

He was very good looking—that attracted most.

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And his unfailing good humour and sweet obliging nature was almost proverbial.

No man ever asked Juan for assistance twice, either pecuniary or otherwise, and no woman could ever say she had met a refusal from him, from fetching another man's letters from the post office to taking a forlorn damsel out for a whole day on the river—because she wished to avoid meeting someone else.

There was only one time in his life that worried him, and that was when it came to saying good-bye to them all, before he rejoined his ship.

This was a trying time always to Don Juan, and he shook his head over the row of photographs for the second time that day, as he realised that one of those periodical partings was swiftly approaching.

"I must really think out a good plan this time," he said musingly. "I shall be worn to a shadow if I have to part separately with them all. I wonder——"

But his meditations were cut short by the opening of his door to admit a tall, fair young man, perhaps a year or so older than himself.

With a hasty exclamation of surprise, Don Juan rose to greet his visitor, first, however, throwing the letter he had just received into the fireplace.

"Hullo, old chap, where did you spring from?" he said as they shook hands.

"So it is you!" was his answer.

"I have been staying over at Highlands with the McGregor's for the past eight weeks, and lately I began to see signs of trouble that I always associated with you, and so I circulated inquiries, and you see I am right!" replied his visitor, helping himself from a box of cigarettes.

Don Juan laughed good-humouredly.

"Signs of trouble?" he repeated. "I like that! What did you see? Quaking bogs opening suddenly or strange volcanic upheavals on the mainland?"

"Two girls, my cousins, both engaged to be married, have been staying up at Highlands, and both the fellows are thirsting for your life. I heard the postmaster giving his daughter a good lecture because she is always out and not attending to business; and several other things which all point towards you."

"All roads lead to Earl's Court," said Don Juan, lying back in his chair. "But touching your cousins; I had no idea that they were your cousins, that, I'll swear was an accident. I was half asleep in my canoe and her

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head had gone out into the stream. Two girls in a skiff, not seeing me—you know yourself girls always row and steer in the most odd manner—bumped me nearly into next week. I rose to remonstrate and saw two very pretty women——"

"Yes, and I can guess the rest," interposed Algernon le Hay, with a smile, that was not a very pleasant one.

"As you say, you can guess the rest," said Don Juan, raising his brown eyes to his friend's blue ones, and he mentally added: "You haven't forgiven me for Effie Mathews yet—but it was a shabby trick!"

"When do you sail?" asked Le Hay, after a pause, during which he had been making a tour of the other's cosily furnished room.

"On the 22nd—I haven't got more than a fortnight."

"And how many broken hearts will you leave behind this time—all these?" indicating the numerous photographs on the mantelpiece.

"I hope not, the weight of all those would overturn the ship."

"Ah, you are a bad lot—I'm not like you. Thank goodness I was never gone on any girl but the one I am engaged to."

Don Juan raised his eyebrows.

"You've forgotten Effie Mathews then," he said slyly.

The other's face darkened, but he continued:

"Yes, I've got the sweetest and best girl in the world, and she is devoted to me—not even you could move her!"

"I hope not, old fellow," said Don Juan, smiling at the rather savage glance the other shot at him from under his light eyebrows.

"No, by Jove! I should like you to meet her. She's awfully pretty, and it would be a take-down for you to meet a lovely woman who wouldn't look at you!"

"Some men are as spiteful as girls."

Juan felt an unaccountable sensation, not to say desire, rise in his heart to meet this unknown fair one.

"You think I need a take down, then?" he asked lazily.

"I know you do. You're too confoundedly conceited for anything," which was an untruth.

"Thanks, old chap. It will please you to hear I have just been elected a member of your club."

Le Hay turned suddenly.

"That you have not!" he said hotly. "I saw to——"

And he stopped, seeing he had made a slip.

Don Juan looked at him and smiled.

"Yes, I guessed who did it."

Le Hay stammered something about doing his best, but ill-feeling among some of the members, but Don Juan's quiet smile stopped him and there was an uncomfortable pause.

The visitor, to change the conversation, took up one or two of the pictures on the mantelpiece and read the various inscriptions under them.

There were professional beauties, and society beauties, beauties of title and beauties of fame, and there were photographs with neither name or message on them.

Suddenly Heathcote was aroused from his thoughts by a quick exclamation and an oath.

He looked up to see Le Hay white with anger looking at a photo which had been behind the others.

"Where the devil did this come from?" he demanded.

"Out of the shop, my boy," replied the other calmly.

"Don't be a fool; where did you get it?"

Don Juan raised his eyebrows ever so slightly, a trick he was fond of when he was annoyed.

"I really don't see how it can interest you."

"Well, it does; I know this lady."

"She'd be honoured if she saw your face this moment; you look the jealous lover to the life."

Le Hay turned on him with a snarl, the other's smooth tone maddened him.

"I have a right to know. Where did you get this picture?"

Heathcote did not answer.

Le Hay, his face white with passion, repeated the question.

"I never betray a confidence. If you wish to know where I got it, ask the lady yourself."

The other turned the piece of cardboard round; on the other side was written in violet ink:

"To my dear. With Clarice's love."

His hand shook as he put it down.

"You refuse to tell me anything about that picture?" he said almost savagely.

Don Juan saw he was in earnest, and more for the sake of the girl than for his friend, he replied:

"My dear chap, we are not in a melodrama. What has upset you over the photo? Tell me, are you fond of the girl, or——"

"Don't speak like that. I am devoted to her, and she is my affianced wife!"

Don Juan whistled, and his brown eyes grew bright at once. Here were complications.

"And you're as jealous as can be! I can see that. I pity you if you marry her. She's a dear little girl, but a flirt!"

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Le Hay ground his teeth. It maddened his selfish and morose temper to hear the girl spoken of in this way.

"How long have you known her?"

"Pardon my putting a question on top of yours: how long have you been engaged?"

"Five weeks."

"H'm! Just at the time I met her. She told me she l——" and he paused.

Le Hay's blue eyes dilated with passion, at the other's slow musical voice.

"No wonder I hate you," he said. "But wait! I'll have it out with her before to-night."

"Take my advice, old chap, and don't try and ride the high horse with her. I have known her as long as you nearly, and know her a good deal better perhaps, having given the sex more attention. She has got a spirit of her own, she's proved it I think, and if you are as fond of her as you say, be careful and don't get her temper up. You'll regret it if you do."

"Regret be hanged! I'll see this matter through and if I find you're at the bottom of it, I shall come back and give you a horse-whipping!" cried Le Hay, striding to the door.

"Charmed I'm sure!" replied Don Juan, showing his white teeth. "Hadn't we better take it for granted that it is my fault, and start horse-whipping now? A man like you is as likely to thrash a woman as a man—more perhaps!"

Le Hay gave him an evil glance and muttering something about "Confounded puppy!" left the room, shutting the door violently.

"The sooner I get to sea the better, I think," mused the sole occupier of the room. "Trouble and I are never far apart," and he took up the photograph of Clarice and looked long at the laughing, mischievous violet eyes, and the proud, red lips set in a wicked little smile.

"Taking two fellows on at once; it's rather good you know, Miss Clarice, when one thinks of it in a calm manner. You've got a nerve, and yet, I suppose I ought not to complain. Engaged a week and then me, and—the usual! I suppose I ought to consider it a compliment. Anyway I am even with him over that membership. Fate is kind!"

And sitting down at his desk he took out a pen and commenced writing a letter.

This occupied him some time, and it was not until he had made several erasures and drawn several freehand efforts with his pen on the blotting-paper, that at last he lifted his brown eyes with a sigh and said:

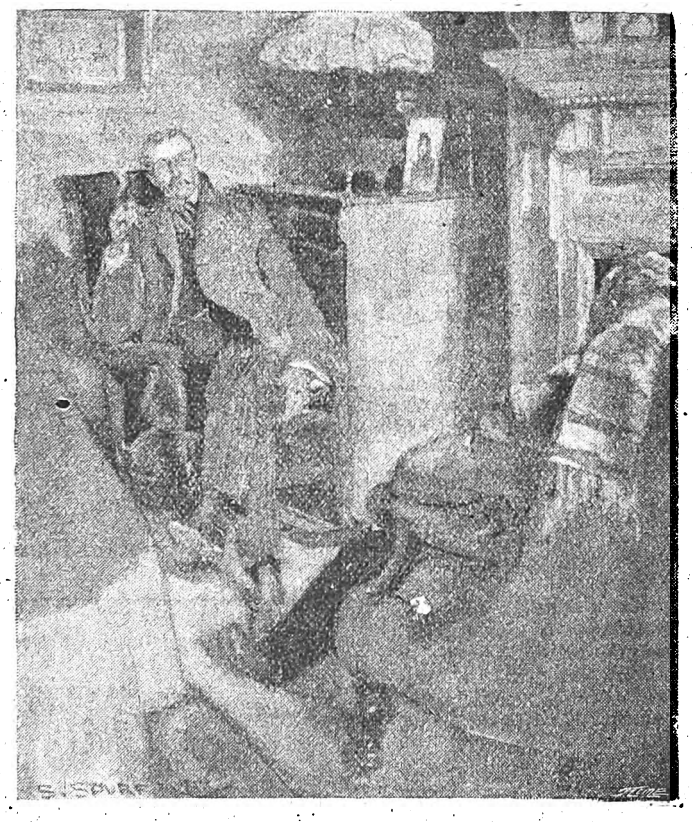
"That's over."

He had evidently quite forgotten the little affair of Le Hay for his handsome countenance wore its accustomed smile as he read aloud the letter he had penned.

It ran thus:

"DEAR ——,—I cannot go away without saying good-bye to you once more. It will be hard to part with you even then—in fact I don't know how I shall get through it. No doubt you will forget me when I am far away—but I hope not. Our friendship has been a very pleasant one—at least to me, so will you grant me one last favour, and meet me under the trees behind Garth's farm to-morrow at five?—Always yours, "JUAN."

"Yes, that will do for all of them," he said as he laid the sheet of paper on his desk.



"All roads lead to Earl's Court."

"It will take me some time to copy them all out, but still, it will be easier than writing a new letter to each," and he sat down to do so, and nothing was heard in the room but the ticking of the clock and the scratch of the pen.

"Ah," murmured Juan as he addressed one of the thirteen envelopes, "Miss Clarice Fernley, The Deaneries, Horsdon, near Headly. We'll soon see about Mr. Algernon Le Hay! If you have any spirit in you, you will answer my letter in person. If you are cowed by that *fiancé* of yours, you won't turn up. Ah well! there will be twelve others," and rising with a sigh Don Juan put on his hat and, whistling to his dog, strolled out of the room, his thirteen letters each addressed to a different young lady, in his pockets.

He laughed as he went down the street.

"Jove! What a time I shall have if they all come," he said.

* * * * *

The clock on the mantelpiece showed a quarter to five.

It was a magnificent afternoon and Heathcote was one of the few young men who was sitting indoors that day.

He was reading a book, stretched out on the couch and seemed in no particular hurry about anything.

Time went on, and the clock struck.

Don Juan raised his head, looked at the timepiece and smiled.

"One or two of them will be there already," he said, and went on reading.

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A quarter past five and he looked up again.

"Most of them will be there by now—I wonder what they will say to each other when they find I've asked them all?" and his eyes returned to his book again.

Another fifteen minutes passed, and then he closed the book with a yawn and went into the other room, from which he shortly emerged, looking handsomer than ever in a suit of grey flannel.

He carefully selected a pink carnation out of his landlady's garden and sauntered down the street.

"I wonder how many will have the patience to wait for me; not many, I know. Well I'm sorry for the others, but what *can* a fellow do with thirteen girls?" and he appealed to a reflection of himself in a passing tailor's shop.

It was striking six as the young gentleman, feeling, let it be known, not a spark of shame for his ungallant conduct, turned the corner by Garth's farm and surveyed the clump of trees that had been the tryst for thirteen damsels.

Not a petticoat was in sight!

"H'm, looks bad for me," soliloquised Don Juan. "Shall go to sea unencumbered after all, it seems—hullo! What's that?" as he caught sight of a white dress between the stems of the trees.

He hurried forward, walking softly on the grass so as to make no noise.

The occupant of the white dress, was sitting on a fallen oak tree and had her back to him.

Her hair was very fair and she wore a large white hat coquettishly trimmed with pink, and tied under her chin in a bow.

Don Juan recognised the sweet figure in a moment and whistled mentally.

"This is Fate! Only one girl waits for me out of thirteen, and that one is Le Hay's choice! Good evening, Miss Clarice, I am afraid I am very late," and with an easy grace he stepped over the tree trunk and sat beside her.

The girl started and then frowned. She made no answer, but taking out her watch, handed it to him.

Don Juan put on his most engaging smile.

"I know," he said, bending towards her so that she could see the admiration in his brown eyes.

"I have no excuse to offer, except—that I knew you would wait for me."

"What about the others then?" snapped Miss Fernley between her red lips.

"Oh, the others!" with an easy shrug. "Did you see any others?"

"Juan, how can you? There were twelve girls here at five o'clock, and they were in a terrible rage with you. They all went after a time. Several went as soon as a lot of others came along."

"But you waited," softly.

"Yes—for a particular reason," very decidedly.

Juan looked the picture of innocent inquiry.

"Don't look at me like that—you are the most deceitful boy in the county—and you've told him!"

"Who?"

"Algernon."

"I did not, dear. He found your photograph and wanted to know where I got it, and I told him to ask you."

The girl nodded her saucy little head.

"And he *did*—he raved like a madman and said a lot of horrid things about you, and dared me ever to speak to you again."

"That is why you are came to-day and waited an hour?"

"Yes," complacently. "I should have waited all night, because I was determined to let Algernon see I intended to do as I like. Oh, Juan; don't!"

For the impetuous young man had kissed her.

"Does he know where you are?"

"No, but I shall tell him when I get home—tell him all about the twelve other girls, and how you kept me waiting an hour!"

Don Juan lay back and laughed.

"I should like to see his face; but aren't you afraid of him—he has got an awful temper?"

"Afraid of Algy? Oh, no!" quite easily. "He won't say much to me, I fancy."

"Why?"

Clarice meditatively twisted a ring of diamonds round her finger.

"Because he'll get this back if he does. In fact, I have a good mind to give it him whether he says anything or not!"

A faint flush came to Clarice's face.

"If you had another to put in its place—would you?" with dangerous softness.

There was no answer.

"Would you take pity on a poor devil like me, and make me the proudest of men?"

The girl looked at him, a sudden softening in her eyes.

Don Juan slipped the ring of diamonds off,

"That fellow doesn't deserve you."

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and replaced it by a ring of rubies he had in his pocket.

"I didn't say 'Yes'!"

"Well, it will be a keepsake until I come back from China."

Clarice looked at the ring a moment, and then suddenly drew it off, replaced the diamonds, and put the rubies over it.

"You are his friend—and I love him a little, and he adores me. I will tell him you put the ruby ring over his to keep them safe," she said.

Don Juan demurred, but the girl was firm.

"Well, don't get married till I come home, dear—promise me that? That fellow doesn't deserve you, and you *might* change your mind," he pleaded.

"Very well, I won't marry till you come back; but don't be away too long." And the girl looked at him with a strange expression in her large blue eyes.

"What if I never come back?" he said, laughingly.

Clarice shuddered.

"Then I shall never marry," she said.

"How terrible. To save you from an ignominious spinsterhood I must return, even if it is from another world!"

And so they parted.

* *

Spring was filling the trees in Hyde Park with little green buds, and the house in Curzon Street was occupied for the season by the beautiful Miss Fernley and her mother.

Up to the door drove a hansom, and out of it stepped a young man.

He had a paper under his arm, and was evidently well known at the house, for the pompous butler admitted him at once and conducted him upstairs to the elegantly furnished drawing-room.

Clarice, a trifle haughtier, and with a more noticeable stamp of that high spirit that had so often led her into trouble, rose languidly and held out her hand.

"How are you, Algy? I did not expect you to-day."

Le Hay kissed her cold and beautiful cheek.

"No; but I had some news to tell you—some news that will, I hope, put an end to this infernal stupidity of yours about delaying our wedding."

The shock had killed her.

The colour rose in a hot wave to the girl's face

"What, Juan?" she said, breathlessly.

"Yes, Heathcote—he's dead!"

The colour faded as quickly as it had come, leaving her whiter than marble. Placing her hand over her heart, she sank down with a quick sob of pain.

"Oh, Algy—how could you? You know my heart is weak," she gasped.

"I'm sorry, dear. But you know how I always hated him, and I did not like him any the better when I heard the absurd promise you had made him about waiting till he came back before you married."

"That was in case I should change my mind," with a momentary return to the old defiant manner, that died away in a spasm of agony.

"A nice thing for me to have to hear. Well, poor fellow, he's dead now."

"You speak as if you were glad."

"I believe I am. He had a horrible death though."

"What did he die of, for oh, I loved him so!" the girl was speaking to herself in a low voice.

Her face was a ghastly white and she was evidently suffering.

Algernon noticed none of this.

"You loved him? This is too much. I *am* glad he's dead now. Fell overboard and the sharks got him!"

Clarice rose from her chair her eyes wild and dilated.

"Sharks? My beautiful boy! Sharks!" And with a shudder she fell forward.

He caught her and laid her on the sofa, and rang for assistance.

Her white lips were stained with a crimson stream that, issuing from her mouth, fell drop by drop upon the ring of rubies that she wore.

The shock had killed her.

ERROLL STANHOPE.

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HIS BRAND OF COURAGE.

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TEN of the volunteers of Wrexton had left their village and gone to Southampton, where the transports to South Africa were awaiting them. There had been a fine tumult in the town when they left. Dick Burge, a veteran of the Indian Mutiny, made a speech, flags floated from the buildings, and the local brass band was even more than usually discordant.

Ten pretty girls wept at the departure of their sweethearts. It is true that some of this love was of an impromptu nature. It had not seemed fair to let one of the fellows go away without a sweetheart, and the boys were nothing loath to a ding another emotion to the many which they were experiencing.

It was fine to be a hero and to venture into the strange parts of the world at the bidding of one's country, but it was magnificent to tear one's self from the tearful embraces of a beautiful girl. So all the boys made a point of doing this.

But the prettiest of all the pretty girls of Wrexton was not well satisfied. Her lover had not been one of the heroic ten. He was, indeed, comfortably seated at home, smoking a cigarette on the lawn of his father's place when she came along on her bicycle in the early morning. He saw her, and called out cheerily:

"Are you the early bird, or the early worm?"

But she was not inclined for frivolity. She dismounted and approached the gate with great seriousness of mein, and he threw away the end of his cigarette, and came to meet her at the gate.

"It's a pleasant home you have, Bernard," she said severely. "I don't think there is a pleasanter one in the town."

"Why so serious about it?" laughed Bernard Gray. "I know it's a fine old place, and I like it more than I can say, but——"

"Oh, there's no doubt that you like it!" cried Fanny Lane, her face flushing with sudden anger. "Nothing—not even your duty—can get you away from it."

"Duty?" said he stupidly. "What duty?"

"So you haven't even had a prick of conscience?" stormed Miss Lane.

"When you saw those fellows who have grown up with you going away yesterday, it never stirred you to shame? You can't see any essential difference between their behaviour and yours, I suppose? I always thought of you as being heroic. I don't think I could ever have—have cared for you at all if I hadn't."

"Why, Fanny!" gasped the young man. "You astonish me. Do you think I stayed at home because I was a coward?"

"I don't know why you stayed at home. I only know that I feel ashamed of you."

"But, Fanny, let me try to explain. I have never desired a military life. Only a few wars in the whole history of the world have seemed justifiable to me. I think I should die if I killed a man. I can never get it out of my head that 'Thou shalt not kill' ought to be taken literally. And, really, I would find it easier to be a hangman and execute a criminal, detestable and horrible as such a task would be to me, than to shoot down innocent men, who would probably be engaged in some cause which seemed righteous to them. I firmly believe that war will cease when society becomes more cultivated."

"The finest men in the world have been proud to go to war, Bernard. It never seems to me that a man is quite a man till he has put himself to the test in that way. A man's life doesn't seem completed without such an experience. It's the proof, somehow, of his masculinity. You have not the nature that I thought you had. I don't want to hurt your feelings, but I must own that I am disappointed."

Bernard Gray turned away and looked across the green, well-kept lawn to the house where his white-haired mother sat in front of the French window, reading.

"I suppose I should be more of a man in your eyes if I left her to heart-breaking anxiety," he said, somewhat disdainfully. "You would think me a finer man if I went out and was slain and took from her her last comfort—slain to support an idea which does not particularly appeal to me. I think I am patriotic, but my patriotism is not the sort to be stirred at the sound of a drum. It is deeper when my country is at honourable peace."

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"And what if it were a shameful peace?"

"Then I should wish to see it broken. Then I would help to break it. But it would be a frightful tragedy. And if battlefields are as hideous as they are said to be, I do not know how I could look at one and keep my reason."

"Well," said Fanny, turning away, the hot tears of honest shame in her eyes, "I suppose you cannot help it. You are as you are. But I would rather see you going away to certain death than to think of you as a coward."

The white-haired old lady rose and waved her handkerchief.

"That is the signal that breakfast is ready, Fanny. Won't you come in? Mother will expect you."

"No, thank you. I don't feel like eating. My heart is heavy, Bernard. I'm afraid we have made a mistake. I fear we shall never agree. It's best to find it out now, you know."

Bernard Gray took the soft cap from his head and crushed it viciously in his hands.

"You are hurting me horribly!" he cried. "How can you humiliate me so?"

"I'm sorry, but I speak honestly."

"This afternoon I am coming round to take you driving. That new pair of horses from Cooper's has been sent in, you know. I told you about them. They are a perfect match. You'll ride behind them with me this afternoon, won't you? When I got them I thought only of the pleasure I would have in driving with you."

"Yes, I'll come. I must talk with you, Bernard. I think I am going to tell you something that will sadden both of us."

"You are going to tell me that you no longer love me!" he ejaculated, between closed teeth, leaning over the gate to look into her averted eyes.

"I think I am going to tell you that I am sorry that I love you, and to ask you to forget that we ever made any promise——"

He interrupted her with an angry exclamation. Then, controlling himself, he said, briefly:

"I shall call for you this afternoon," and, after assisting her on her bicycle, he strode up the path to his house.

By the afternoon Fanny had decided that there was no doubt about the mistake. She could never be proud with a temperamental coward. She could not approve of anyone with such a pacific, pusillanimous character. He might apologise for it all he pleased—he talked well.

But his talking made no record of heroic deeds. Such a life as the one he proposed leading would not enrich the annals of a family.

The restless roans kicked up the dust of the summer road, and Fanny could not refuse a glance of admiration at them as she came slowly down the path that afternoon. She had dressed herself soberly for her drive, and her glowing auburn hair and flushed cheeks were the only vivid things about her. Her costume was black, severe, but, like all she wore, with a distinctive style of its own.

"I'll have to ask you to get into the phaeton alone, Fanny," said her lover. "I have not got well acquainted with these boys yet, and they are restless."

She stepped lightly into the vehicle, and the next moment they were dashing down the road. She could not bring herself to speak, and Bernard said nothing.

The country was beautiful with the splendour of the warm spring upon it, and she watched it with appreciative eyes. It seemed as if this swift journey might take her away from the miserable fact confronting her—the fact of her hero's fall.

At the side of the road, two or three miles from the town, was a basket factory, and the young horses, inexperienced in the noises of the world, took great fright at the steam exhaust. In a moment they had become frantic. Bernard Gray stood up and wound the reins several times about his strong young arms. His quieting voice rang out, laden with reassurance, to the terrified creatures.

"Steady, steady, Tom; steady. Jim; whoa, there!"

But with wild tossings of the head, and leaps and swervings, they plunged down the road.

"The harness is new," he managed to say to Fanny. "I think it will hold. Sit still. I am sure I can conquer them. Have confidence, my dear."

But an unexpected thing happened.

In front of a farmhouse which they approached two little children were seen, sitting in the dust of the road, playing, and at the side of the road was a pile of broken bricks. To keep to the road was to kill the children. To turn, was to bring destruction upon the horses, the vehicle, and, probably, the people within it.

"It's the babies or us, Fanny," muttered Bernard, with hard-drawn breath. "Of course, we must take our chances."

"Of course," said Fanny. She shut her eyes. She waited for the end. But it seemed to her that there was a slacking of their velocity. She opened her eyes again, hardly conscious, to find that her companion had actually curbed the horses till they were fairly cowed. A moment more and he had them literally crouching, and the shaft was over the pile of bricks.

Fanny seemed to know what was desired. She leapt from the phaeton, and, picking the children up by their arms slung them out of harm's way, and a few seconds later was back beside her lover.

"No, no," he said, "you should not have come back. The danger is not past."

"I go where you go," she responded. "No matter how far or how wildly you drive, I am going with you, now and always."

The trembling horses regained their feet. Dizzy and bewildered, and dripping with sweat, they went on down the road, Bernard soothing them with his voice.

"You are not going to tell me that dreadful thing, after all?" he found an opportunity to inquire.

"I love you," she responded. "You are a brave man."

S. T. WOOD.

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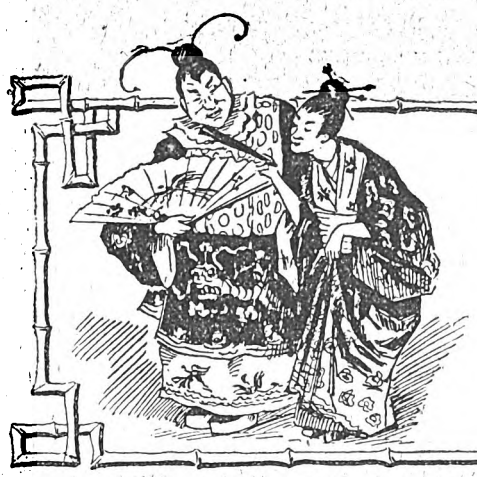

Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

4.—HE SHOWS MRS. BOWSER HOW TO DO SPRING-CLEANING.

"WOULD you mind if we had breakfast half an hour earlier than usual?" asked Mrs. Bowser the other evening as Mr. Bowser got seated with his cigar and newspaper.

"Of course not. But why?" he queried in reply.

"Well, I thought I'd begin housecleaning to-morrow. I've got two women and a man coming to help me, and I want to get an early start."

"Two women and a man, eh?" he mused as he laid down his paper. "Two women and a man, and it will take you a month."

"Oh, no; I hope to get through in three days."

"In other words, Mrs. Bowser, this house is to be upset from cellar to garret for the next three days in order that a man and two women may loaf about and charge you ten shillings a day apiece for it. That's your way exactly. Great Scott! but I don't believe there's another woman like you on earth!"

"Haven't I got to clean house?" she asked.

"Yes, things have got to be tumbled over once a year, I suppose, but I don't propose to be upset for three or four days nor pay out five pounds in cash. What housecleaning is wanted about here can be done in one hour by the clock, and I'm the person to do it. I want exercise to work off about three pounds of superfluous flesh. I'll change my clothes and be ready in five minutes."

Mr. Bowser had the furniture out of the drawing-room.

"But you—you can't clean house!" pleaded Mrs. Bowser as she barred his way upstairs.

"Just let me go. I've thought of another plan. I'll do it, one room at a time, and all by myself."

"What's the matter that I can't clean house? You watch me now, and see. There's no use for you to spend a week over what I can do in an hour. I'll take the drawing-room first, and you needn't worry."

Mrs. Bowser dropped into a chair with a groan, and Mr. Bowser jumped into an old suit and was downstairs with the stepladder in ten minutes.

The family cat came up from the kitchen and saw him in his shirt sleeves and a grim look on his face, and she quietly slipped under the sofa to be clear of the shower when the splinters began to fly.

"A man and two women, eh? Three days and five pounds expense to clean a house! Kindly keep track of my motions."

And with five twists and a yank Mr. Bowser had the furniture out of the drawing-room into the sitting room. The casters chirruped and the dust flew, and Mrs. Bowser dodged the dancing chairs and made her way upstairs. There were pictures and wall ornaments to come down. It would have taken Mrs. Bowser half a day to remove them, but the time consumed by Mr. Bowser was a little short of twelve minutes. That was a saving of eleven hours and forty-eight minutes to begin with.

In taking the pictures down he grabbed them by the corners and gave a flirt and a twist and snapped wires or hooks and started the moulding from the wall, but he was working against time.

As the last picture came down the corner struck and knocked the nose off of a marble bust of Shakespeare, and Mrs. Bowser called down to know what had happened.

"Nothing—nothing 'tall," replied Mr. Bowser as he picked up the nose and flung it out of the window. "You just keep quiet, and I'll show you how to do spring cleaning. I don't think we'll have to put breakfast ahead of the usual time."

In carrying the ornaments into the sitting room he struck a vase against a chair and shivered it, but the shiver didn't reach Mrs. Bowser, and he had nothing to complain of. The cat purred and grinned as she looked out from her lair.

Things were getting interesting. They got more interesting as Mr. Bowser loaded up with rugs and came staggering in to trip over his own feet and come down on his knees and roll over on the broad of his back.

"I—I thought you had gone through the floor!"

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said Mrs. Bowser as she came hurrying downstairs.

"And suppose I had!" he demanded, as he struggled up. "I'm bossing this job, and if I want to break through the floor that's my business. You see what I've accomplished, don't you? In twenty-two minutes I've done more housecleaning than you and your crowd could have accomplished in three days. Don't come interfering."

The room having been cleared of furniture, the next thing in order was to take up the carpet. Some folks waste time by prying out the tacks, but there is another way, and Mr. Bowser caught on it at once. Having got a corner loosened, he seized the border in both hands and heaved and tugged, and all there was a rip, rip, rip! along the floorboards. All he had to do was to walk round the room and pull away.

Some men would have folded the carpet over and rolled it up when it was free from the floor, but Mr. Bowser didn't. He drew a long breath, wiped the sweat out of his eyes and rushed the carpet together in a heap to resemble a small haystack. As a sort of grand wind up and to reduce the height of the pile he fell on it.

He felt himself going and yelled "Murder."

Two yells and a whoop followed, and the sounds jumped the cat out from under the sofa and brought Mrs. Bowser downstairs on wings. He hadn't meant to yell when he fell foul of the tacks and imagined for a minute that he had kicked over a bumblebee's nest, but he was taken by surprise. However, Mrs. Bowser found him on his feet and struggling to preserve a calm and careless demeanour, and she could only remark:

"It must have been cats fighting in the garden. I see you've got the carpet up. The next thing is to dust the ceiling. I'll get you a feather duster."

When she had handed him the duster and disappeared, Mr. Bowser advanced and kicked that heap of carpet about forty times as hard as he could swing his leg. A hundred tacks had jabbed into him and left smarting wounds, but he felt easier after the kicking. All that was needed now to finish up was to use the duster. He carried the stepladder over to a corner, and mounted it, and began work, and, as he worked, he chuckled.

Mrs. Bowser had figured on standing the house on its head for two or three weeks, but he had got the best of her.

Breakfast and dinner would be served at the usual hours, and he wouldn't have to climb over scrub brooms, mop sticks, and pails of water to get in or out of the house. He was using the duster about as a labourer does a crowbar and flattering himself that the house, would soon go to rack without him when some movement caused the foot of the ladder to slip.

Mr. Bowser let fall the duster and grabbed something but it was too late. He felt himself going, and he yelled "Murder!"

He heard the cat pattering in over the bare floor, and he heard Mrs. Bowser on the stairs, and then he landed somewhere and saw stars and suns and moons dancing before his eyes, and the sound of many wheels going round was in his ears. He wasn't dead. He hadn't even broken a leg. He opened his eyes to find his head and shoulders on the floor and his feet slanting up on the haystack of a carpet. As he lay thus for a moment he heard the cook asking in an awed voice:

"Is he dead at last?"

And Mrs. Bowser's voice was also plain as she answered:

"I don't think so. I think he turned over twice and struck on his back. Keep the cat away while I fan him."

Then Mr. Bowser lost sight of stars and suns and moons, and the sound of wheels died away, and he returned to consciousness and good old England. He took one leg down at a time and then slowly and with becoming dignity stood up and leaned against the wall. The cook withdrew, and the cat stalked away, and Mrs. Bowser was left face to face with whatever might come. It was not long coming.

"I see; I understand!" whispered Mr. Bowser as he nodded his head.

"You—you had a fall."

"Yes, attempted assassination. Who sneaked down here and kicked that stepladder from under me? Who, I say, who, who, who?"

And, pointing the accusing finger of justice at Mrs. Bowser, he slowly and laboriously climbed his way upstairs and left her with her conscience. M. QUAD.

NEXT WEEK: *He turns to Phrenology and finds various bumps and adventures.*

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LOVERS' quarrels are usually regarded—by other people—as comparable with April showers; there is a short and heavy downpour followed with astounding rapidity by bright sunshine. Like the showers, they occur when least expected; the sun is shining brightly at one moment, and the next minute the sky is overcast and down comes the rain.

The quarrels seem to onlookers to have no proper cause, and in many instances this view is quite correct; but to the parties immediately concerned the whole thing is of the highest importance and gravity—a matter of life and death almost. When the quarrel is made up, they may feel that it was not quite as bad as it appeared to them at the time; but it must be remembered that nothing seems so bad when it is past and we are able to look back upon the occurrence with equanimity.

Why Janet Hayes and Albert Saxby wanted to fall out, and make things uncomfortable for the other members of the party at Winstone Grange, on the evening of only the second day after the arrival of the young people composing the party, was a thing which no one else under that roof could understand.

They had been engaged about two months, and were apparently devoted to each other—just a trifle too much so occasionally, perhaps—and a quarrel between them was most unexpected.

It was decidedly inconvenient also, because Janet was a distant relation of Mrs. Winstone and a friend of Madge, the daughter of the hostess, and both mother and daughter had counted upon the assistance of Janet to make the party a success.

And now that this unfortunate difference had arisen between the lovers, Janet's help was minimised; for how could she be so helpful when she declined to speak to one male member of the party, and went about with the consciousness that the affair was known to all the others? It was most provoking, thought Mrs. Winstone and Madge.

"It won't last, my dear," said Mrs. Winstone to her daughter just before luncheon on the following day. "I wouldn't worry about it. Such little tiffs are soon over."

"I don't think it will be over so soon as you imagine, mamma," returned her daughter. "I can't quite make out what Albert did to upset her, but Janet is very angry; and although she is one of the nicest girls you could wish to meet, still she can sulk for a good long time. And fancy spending the rest of the fortnight with those two in that mood! And I fear it may be worse; they are both rather quick-tempered, and the engagement may be broken off."

Mrs. Winstone shook her head with a smile, but Madge continued:

"It would be a pity to mar a man's happiness for some trifling offence, and that is what may happen if the quarrel is not patched up. He has offended Janet in some way—I learnt that much, but I am sure it was something very trivial. He is too good and honourable to——"

Madge stopped to do something and Mrs. Winstone shot a swift glance at her daughter. The guests were coming in, and there was no chance of further conversation.

It was a young people's party. Mrs. Winstone was a widow of independent means who took great pleasure in the society of the younger generation, and she had organised a party of about a dozen young men and maidens to spend a fortnight at the Grange, with the inducement of boating and cycling excursions and amusements of various kinds in a lovely part of the country.

But two more days went past and the quarrel continued.

Some of the more mischievous of the young people had done their best to make things so awkward for the one-time lovers—by leaving them alone together and by arranging matters so that Saxby had to sit next to Janet or take her in to dinner, that it was hoped that the very difficulty of the situation would bring about a reconciliation; but that object had not been attained.

Saxby, finding that Janet would have no more of him, began to pay more attention to Madge. The other young people noticed this, and began to exchange significant glances and, as the attention continued and even increased, to talk about it among themselves.

"If Janet doesn't make it up quickly," said Jack Roberts to Elsie Brand and two or three others, "she will lose Bert Saxby. There was nothing in it, of course; but Janet rides the high horse sometimes. Bert is a high-spirited fellow, and if he gets it into his head that he has been unjustly treated, I'll bet a trifle that he'll have nothing more to do with her."

"And I think, Jack," said Elsie confidentially, about

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ten minutes later when they were alone in the shrubbery, "that we shall soon hear of an engagement between Bert Saxby and Madge Winstone."

"And all because Bert did what he had a perfect right to do and what no girl in her right mind——"

And after that there was a scuffle, and when Elsie had put her hat straight she told him that if he wasn't careful there would be another quarrel in the house.

"Oh, nothing!" said Jack in answer to her inquiry. "He kissed her on the open road and two people just happened to see him. She didn't like it and kicked up a fuss—just for a little thing like that!"

While this was going on, a short conversation was taking place in the house between Bert Saxby and Madge Winstone.

"But I thought you cared for her?" said Madge, looking at him steadily.

"So I—did," returned Saxby shortly.

"So you do, you mean!" insisted Madge quietly. "Why—well if you force me to speak plainly, I must—why don't you patch up this wretched quarrel which is making both of you miserable?"

"I tried, but she rejected my advances," said Saxby, drawing himself up stiffly. "The advance must come from her now; I cannot subject myself to any further indignity."

Later in the day a similar interview took place between Janet and her friend, but the efforts of the peacemaker were in vain. Janet asserted in the most emphatic manner that she had ceased to care for Mr. Albert Saxby, that she didn't care if he married another girl before the week was out, and she had done with him for ever—so there! After that, Madge returned to think it over.

On the following day the guests at Winstone Grange were excited by an occurrence of a different nature, although, by some freak of fate, it concerned one of the parties to the quarrel which had occupied their attention for the last few days.

Jack Roberts possessed a gold watch chain of antique design which had been in his family for about a century and of which he thought a great deal; he usually wore this on special occasions, for it always attracted attention, and Jack was a young man to whom such notice was very pleasant. He had missed this chain, which he kept in a small case, from his room.

Mrs. Winstone was much vexed at the occurrence; her servants were all above suspicion, as she stoutly declared, and she did not think for a moment that the ornament had been taken by one of them.

At first she thought and suggested that Roberts might have lost it in the grounds or in the district somewhere, but this was rather a poor explanation, because the case was also gone. Moreover, Roberts was positive that he had not lost it outside, for the very good reason that he had taken it off and put it into the case after his return, and had worn another chain during the evening. This fact was corroborated by most of the guests.

Jack set great store by this chain, but he concealed his vexation at the loss as much as he could from Mrs. Winstone, as he wished to spare that lady's feelings; but it was a serious matter, he said, and ought to be sifted to the bottom.

A most uncomfortable feeling pervaded the whole assembly of guests, for in cases like this suspicion is likely to fall upon anyone.

Mrs. Winstone said that she hesitated to tell her servants that their rooms and boxes must be examined, but she supposed it would have to be done.

Taking the cue from her, all the young people declared their readiness to let her and Mr. Roberts respectively watch them as they turned out their things, as they did not wish to leave anything undone that would allow a shadow of suspicion to rest upon anyone.

Jack Roberts protested, but in a half-hearted way, that he did not wish to subject any of them to such an ordeal, although it was strange where that chain had gone.

As for poor Mrs. Winstone, she was in a state of great agitation, and heartily wished that she had not given play to her good nature by providing a pleasant holiday for a dozen young people.

Before proceeding to such extremes, the hostess decided to have a careful search made by one of her footmen.

This young fellow was an Italian who had only been in England a fortnight and scarcely knew twenty words of English; he was the son of some worthy people with whom Mrs. Winstone and her daughter had lodged in an Italian village, and who had written to her to ask if she could find a place for the young fellow so that he might have a chance of learning the language.

It was the young fellow's intention to become a courier in due course. Mrs. Winstone had consented, and had resolved that Giuseppe should fill a vacancy that had occurred in her own household.

It was rather difficult to make Giuseppe understand what he had to do, for they knew very little Italian; but by dint of signs, and a language that was a mixture of English, French and Italian, they succeeded fairly well. They called him Joseph; it was the English of his own name and much easier for them to pronounce.

So Joseph was summoned by Mrs. Winstone to a private room, and was made to understand that he was to look for a brown leather case of a certain description, but it is very doubtful whether he understood—or whether the lady of the house even endeavoured to tell him—what were to be the limits of his search.

The hostess went back to the drawing-room where her guests were reading and otherwise trying to pass an uncomfortable time.

It was raining rather heavily, so there was no getting out for the present, but every one of the young people would gladly have risked getting wet in order to escape the ordeal of passing an hour or so together in the drawing-room.

But they were not forced to wait so long as that, for in about ten minutes Joseph re-appeared with the lost leather case in his hand. Everyone uttered either a cry of joy or a sigh of relief, and Jack Roberts took the case from the Italian's hand with many questions as to where he had found it.

Joseph shook his head and turned to Mrs. Winstone, who plied him with questions of her own in the mixed tongue to which she usually had recourse.

"I think there must be some mistake in what he says," said Madge suddenly, before her mother could speak. "He says that he found it under the pillow of Mr. Saxby's bed."

The sudden intrusion of a thunder-bolt would not have caused more consternation. They all knew that Saxby had been anxious to possess the chain, as it matched a necklace owned by his mother; he had offered to purchase it on two or three occasions, the last offer having been made to Roberts in the presence of all the members of the party on the first night of their stay. And now it seemed that his desire had become covetousness, and

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that he had taken secretly that which he could not purchase openly.

Saxby started up when he saw all eyes turned upon him in wonderment and distrust.

"Do you think that I stole the wretched thing?" he exclaimed hotly. "That Italian idiot doesn't know what he is talking about. Here, Roberts, I'll come with you and Joseph and we'll see where he found it."

They went off, but when they returned Saxby was rather crestfallen. It was quite true, Joseph had found it tucked away under the bolster.

"All I can say is," insisted Saxby, almost fiercely, "that I didn't take it. Do you think I did?" he asked, turning suddenly to Roberts.

"We must see what can be done to clear up the matter," interposed Madge Winstone quickly, without giving the hesitating Roberts a chance to reply.

"It's a very awkward affair," said Roberts lamely, looking at Madge and avoiding Saxby's glaring eyes. "I expect we shall clear it up, but the chief thing is that the chain has come back to me."

There was a murmur from the rest of the guests—an indefinite sound which might mean anything but was interpreted as unfavourable to Saxby. Mrs. Winstone was very pale, but she kept silent.

Saxby looked from one to another with a face which now expressed dismay. Did they all believe him guilty? And if so, how on earth was he to clear himself?

"Are you all against me?" he began in uncertain tones. "Do you all think——"

He stopped abruptly, not knowing what to say. Then he felt a small hand slip into his, and Janet's voice sounded close to him, firmly and quietly.

"No, Bertie, I for one do not believe you capable of such a mean, despicable thing! I don't care if all the world believes it and is against you, I'll stand by you. Whatever happens, it will not drive me from your side!"

And Janet clasped his hand tightly and looked round at all present with flashing, defiant eyes.

This was so unexpected that Saxby felt in a whirl, coming as it did on the top of the exciting events of the past few minutes.

Then his heart was filled with the sweetness of having a champion, someone who was prepared to stick to him in the hour of suspicion, and that person the one he loved. Moved by the impulse of the moment he clasped her in his arms and kissed her passionately.

As he released her, Janet's eyes met those of Madge Winstone and she remembered what she had said to her friend only a short time previously. Janet drew herself up and again spoke defiantly.

"Yes, I know I said that I didn't care for him and that I wouldn't have anything more to do with him, but I've changed my mind! A woman wouldn't be worthy of the name of a woman if she didn't stand by a man when he was accused so unjustly, and I'll stand by Bertie even if I have to go to prison with him!"

In her excitement Janet was unconscious of the want of logic in her remarks and her conduct, but her intention was fully evidenced by the tone of determination in her voice.

Madge and Roberts exchanged a swift glance, and then the former spoke again.

"Everyone admires and honours you for what you are doing, Janet dear. I am sure there must be some horrible mistake. Joseph has muddled things, perhaps. I'll speak to him myself quietly."

"It's a dead certainty there's some terrible blunder," said Jack Roberts in a most decided tone. "I'm quite sure that no one ever thought that Bert was capable of such a thing. I didn't, but I was so confused and worried that I don't exactly know what I said."

A murmur of approval came from the others; the sun peeped out at that moment and everything seemed to be brighter.

"I think that you young people had better go out in the open for a little," said Mrs. Winstone, to whom her daughter had whispered a few words. "The wet soon soaks into the sandy paths and you will not find it unpleasant. In the meantime Madge and I will most probably get to the bottom of the matter."

They all appeared to be very glad of the chance to get out of the house. Bertie and Janet were seen strolling together towards a secluded portion of the grounds, and the others all went in the opposite direction.

When they were once more gathered in the house, Madge explained what had occurred. Joseph had been engaged in mending a caster on a heavy chair in Roberts' bedroom—he was a handy young fellow with tools—and had taken up the case to look at it, having been attracted by its antique appearance; but as he was examining it he heard that young gentleman at the door, and in his confusion at the idea of being caught, he slipped it into his pocket.

As Roberts wanted to change his dress, Joseph had to leave, and he felt very uncomfortable at the thought that he might get into trouble for having meddled with the case. He sought the earliest opportunity of replacing it; but he apparently made a mistake in the room, for he went into the chamber occupied by Saxby. Then it occurred to him that the occupant might have missed the case, and if he put it back in the same spot it might lead to detection.

Revolving in his mind the best plan of action, Joseph hit upon the idea—which he had thought an excellent one—of putting it under the bolster; the owner might think that he had placed it there for safety during the night and had forgotten the fact. It was not a grand scheme, but it was the best that Joseph could devise.

When he was asked to search for the case, his conscience smote him. He could not quite understand whether his action was known to Mrs. Winstone or not, and in his anxiety and confusion he fetched the case from its hiding-place and endeavoured to cover himself by a lame explanation how it got there.

This explanation was not properly understood, and the general dismay at the discovery served the purpose of shielding Joseph. All this had been elicited by dint of patient questioning and repetition.

That was the story reported by Madge to her mother and by the latter in turn to the guests. But that Joseph was not the only one concerned was proved by the last of a few remarks which passed between Jack Roberts and Madge Winstone.

"It's all right now," said Madge. "Our little plot worked well, didn't it?"

"Splendidly!" was the reply of Jack Roberts. "It's rather a good thing that Joseph doesn't understand a lot of English. But the end justifies the means in this case."

"Yes, I am very glad," murmured Madge to herself that night in her own room. "I feel dreadfully wicked, but a woman will do anything to render happy the man she loves. And he will be happy with her! I am glad, glad, although——"

A violent, heartrending sob completed the sentence.

G. Williams.

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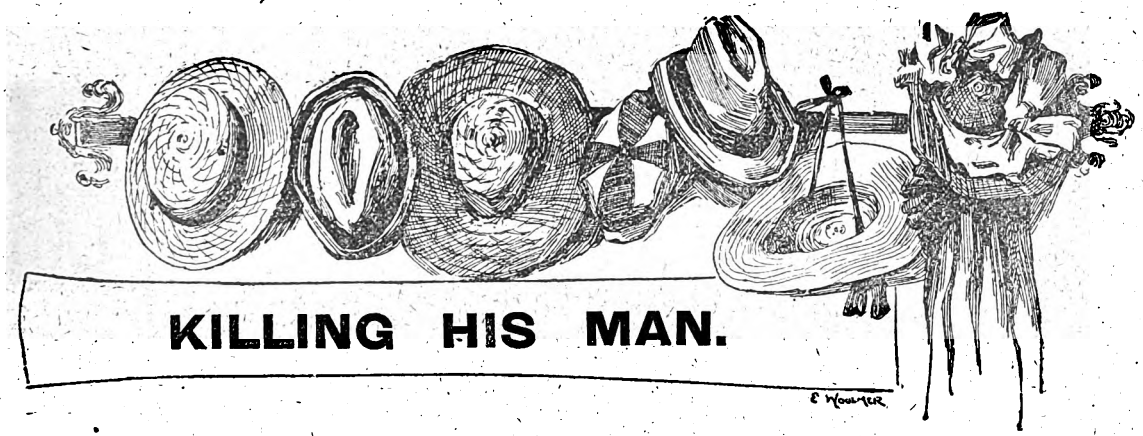

KILLING HIS MAN.

THERE was peace in war—that is, the armies were in winter quarters, with miles of neutral ground between, and except for a little skirmishing along the front there was rest for half a million men. Men had grown weary of marches and battles and killing. They wanted to forget the cries of the wounded and the sight of the dead.

Along the river and forest and over the old fields the pickets on either side stacked their muskets and ignored each other's presence. In the heat of a campaign they would have been sharpshooting at each other—hiding, dodging, ambushing, killing—but now they smoked their pipes or roasted acorns, and read their letters from home as they went on duty.

"Have I ever killed a man?"

Of a sudden, as he lay dozing on his bed in camp one day, Private Hollins asked this question of himself.

He had been in battle and skirmish. He had fired away his forty rounds and fired to kill, but as he began to recall all his battles he could not remember that he had ever had an enemy so near and so fairly before him that his bullet had surely done the work.

There were few soldiers who boasted of taking life. There were sharpshooters who had brought down a dozen men, but they never talked about it.

Men were promoted for desperate fighting, which sometimes meant killing single handed, but they were proud only of the promotion.

It was a curious question Private Hollins asked of himself, and it led to strange results.

He was not a bloodthirsty man, and yet as he lay thinking the idea came to him that he had not done himself justice as a soldier. He had not killed a man.

When the war was over and he had returned home, he would be asked the question.

His friends and neighbours wouldn't be satisfied with his record of battles, but would sweep it aside and say:

"Yes; we know you were in five or six battles and that you fired hundreds of bullets at the enemy, but can you truthfully say you ever brought a man down?"

He couldn't say it, and he felt that he would lose caste. This feeling brought a sudden resolve. It was a resolve that startled him at first, but the more he thought of it the more determined he was to carry it out.

He would kill a man; he would do it next time he went on picket. There were no orders against firing. It was by tacit agreement among the pickets that they refrained.

If he brought one of the enemy down, he would not be reproved even if not praised. He would not boast of the kill to his comrades, but when he reached home, and farmers and their wives and sons sat listening to his stories of war he could answer the question they would be sure to put, and answer in the affirmative.

It was a fortnight before Private Hollins was detailed for picket duty. He was not impatient. He was willing that time should pass, but when the opportunity came he would kill a man. He never wavered in this resolution. There was no exultation at the thought, but neither did its contemplation cause him any qualms of conscience.

"This is your post, Hollins," said the corporal as he left him one afternoon at the edge of a wood under a large oak. "We don't know exactly where the enemy's picket is, but it's somewhere round that log house. However, if you don't get too fresh and go to walking about in the open he won't bother you. There hasn't been a shot fired along here for two weeks. If you go in for roasted acorns, don't make much of a fire."

"To-day I shall kill a man," said Private Hollins as he was left alone, and he began his preparations at once.

At long rifle shot, away across an old cottonfield, was a log house with a few fruit trees standing about it. One might be sure the farmer was off to war and that wife and children, if they had not abandoned the place, were having a miserable existence.

Hollins crept down to the fringe of bushes on his side of the field and peered and watched and waited like an Apache in ambush.

For an hour he saw nothing. Then a gaunt, ill-used dog came among the trees and trotted about in the open in a sneaking, furtive way.

If the dog was there, the house must be inhabited. He had just come to this conclusion when he caught sight of a figure among the trees.

It was between the house and the bushes, where he believed the enemy's picket was lying. It must be the picket on his way to and from the well. Perhaps he had gone to the house to light his pipe or boil his coffee. There was a glimpse and it was gone. Another glimpse, another hiding, and then the figure was fair to view.

It was a long shot, but a pretty fair target, and without an instant's hesitation he drew up his gun and fired. When he looked over the smoke, the figure was gone.

"But I know I hit him, and he's lying dead on the grass," said the soldier as he reloaded his gun. "Now I can tell them at home that I killed a man. Mighty long shot, but I dropped him for certain."

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The dog was still in the open. As the shot rang out he looked back among the trees. As the echoes died away he turned his head towards Hollins and howled dismally. A moment later and the figure of a young girl appeared beside the dog. She was bareheaded, barefooted, and not over eight years old. Hesitating for only a moment, she began advancing across the field.

The smoke from the soldier's musket had located him. The dog followed at her heels, with head and tail down, and with surprise Hollins watched the girl's approach. It took her five minutes to cross the field.

She came straight at him as he stood up among the bushes, and when she reached him she extended her hand and clasped his and said:

"Come along, you!"

He rested his musket against a log and permitted her to lead him out into the open and across the field.

He did not inquire why she had come. He did not ask where she was leading him. Not a question passed his lips, nor did she speak further.

Straight across the field to the trees among which his victim had stood, but long before he got there he saw a form on the grass.

By-and-bye they were close up to it, and the girl let go of his hand and pointed, and said:

"You shot mam!"

It wasn't a man lying dead on the grass, soldier or farmer, but a woman.

The soldier rubbed his eyes and looked around in a dazed way. A boy of ten and a girl of five came out of the house and stood there and looked from the soldier to the dead woman and back.

They spoke no word; they shed no tears. It was true that the enemy's picket post was in the bushes a few rods away. The man on post came out of his hiding. He came walking slowly down, and when he had reached the body there was a gasp in his throat.

He looked round upon the children, looked up at the blue sky as if speaking to God and, with a groan, turned his back on the place and returned to his post.

"Well?" queried Hollins of the children as they continued to stare at him.

They simply pointed to the mother lying dead and uttered no word. The soldier tried to speak again, but he could not.

With face whiter than the one on the grass, with quivering chin and blinded eyes, he made his way slowly across the old field to his post. As he lurched and staggered he heard the dog howl again, but no one fired upon him, no one called to him.

When he reached his post, he sat down on the ground and covered his face with his hands and groaned. An hour later the corporal came with the relief.

Hollins was lying on the ground with arms extended.

"Boys," said the corporal, as he bent over the body, "I'll be hanged if Dan hain't gone and killed himself with his own musket! Who'd ever have thought it of him!"

Up there among the trees, standing about with the awe of death upon them, the children had heard the shot, and as they looked at each other the girl had whispered:

"Perhaps he's dead too!"

F. H. Clements.

Private Leckie's Fiasco.

Cannanore society was in a ferment; the new regiment had arrived, a go-ahead, festively inclined corps; and—*inter alia*—the officers had resuscitated the long disused theatre, which they were to reopen with a series of "variety" performances; to be followed by heavier stuff, as soon as they had gauged the histrionic capabilities of the older residents; those of the gentler sex especially; who, as is usual in all Indian "up-country" stations, were at a premium in this as well as in all other matters.

On opening night one of the "turns" embodied the singing of a parody on "Believe me if all those endearing young charms," entitled "In Dyot Street, Bloomsbury Square;" the singer representing a love-sick servant girl, attired *à la* lodging-house slavey, and armed with a dust pan and long broom. They had had this before at their last station; the character having been sustained by a Captain's wife, but now no longer with the regiment. However, on the present occasion it was to be undertaken by Private Cooper, recently come out with a draft; and who could "sing woman" with wonderful facility. He was a short, smooth-faced young fellow; and as the management committee had not yet been able to complete their "properties," Miss Malcolm, the tallest lady in the place, had volunteered to furnish the necessary habiliments, which, with some alteration, answered the purpose admirably. Cooper's "turn" stood fourth on the programme; but when the stage-manager looked for him, he was not to be found. He had been seen earlier in the evening, but no one could say what had become of him. The management was in a dilemma; the more so, as the whole of Society, headed by the Brigadier Commanding, were present; and the parody was looked on as one of the "hits" of the show. They were about deciding to skip the "turn," when a soldier cam round from the back seats to the green-room door.

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"What do you want?" asked Major Clay, the stage-manager.

"Cooper, sir, be taken bad, and told me as I was to offer to sing his song," replied the man, saluting.

"And can you?" asked Clay, eagerly.

"Yes, sir, I take the women's parts in our own free-and-easies, along with Cooper."

"But do you know this particular song?" asked another.

"Dyot Street, sir? Yes, sir; I've been here when Cooper was a-practisin' it; and I know what to do."

"Good man; Come along—this room—get into your things—there they are, all laid out for that beggar Cooper—we'll call you when it's your time to go on."

Now, this man, a young fellow too, named Leckie, stood six feet three inches in his socks; so, when he arrayed himself in Miss Malcolm's apparel, there showed a good sixteen inches gap where there "hadn't oughter." Therefore, when he issued from his room and appeared before Major Clay and his fellows, they greeted him with a suppressed howl of dismay and amusement.

"Oh, I say that'll never do!" exclaimed Clay.

"Should think not!" added another. "There's been enough murmuring against the theatre as it is; and this would shock them entirely; they'll think it is a ballet!"

"Hang it all! What's to be done?" muttered Clay, "He can't go on like that; the General, for one, wouldn't like it; leave alone the *padre* and his lot."

"No time to cut open the hem, eh?" queried a married officer, examining the skirt.

"Time! Why, hark at them drumming away; he ought to be half thro' his song by now."

Leckie stood grinning; and the *possé* of soldier scene-shifters and helps stood in a group grinning too.

"Deuce take it!" growled Clay.

"I can suggest something, sir," now put in Leckie, instinctively coming to "attention," though laden with his dust pan and broom; a combination so intensely ridiculous that all there went into fits!

Fortunately, the Band Sergeant, who led the orchestra, divining some hitch, had struck up the "Burlesque" galop by way of diversion.

"Out with it!" cried Clay, as soon as he could command his voice.

"The punkah-fringe, sir," pointing to the stage, "take it down, and pin it round me—like a flounce."

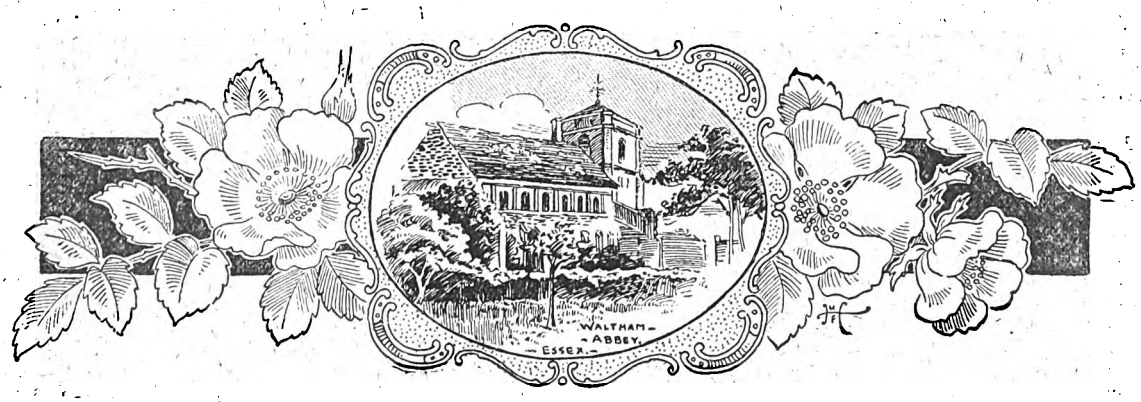
A short punkah hung suspended over the stage; a relic of by-gone days, when people held theatricals during the hot weather even. The fringe, a brown holland affair, trimmed with red braid, presented the very thing, and though somewhat incongruous, was just about the right length and breadth, and, moreover ready at hand; it held to the punkah frame by brass hooks and eyes, and consequently was easy of detachment. Instantly grasping the idea, Clay and one or two others sneaked on to the stage—their appearance being greeted with derisive applause—gingerly unhooked the fringe, brought it into the wings, and, by means of the ready-to-hand hooks, as gingerly fastened it to the skirt, and behold the defect was remedied. Leckie went on, and began to sing in right good style.

During the intervals between the verses, he had to indulge in a little *pas seul* by way of aiding zest to the song. Accordingly when he had finished his first stanza, he started to shuffle and piroutte about; but he soon desisted from these antics, and set to sneezing violently!

The audience, believing this was part of the play, applauded and laughed, but when the band sergeant first, then the orchestra, then the first rows, all fell a-sneezing in succession, the whole house was in an uproar from laughing and sneezing combined. Leckie continued "a-tchowing," so did the others: but when Clay and his fellows came on the boards to ascertain the reason for the disturbance, and they—one and all—took to sneezing as well, there was no holding the house; the audience simply shrieked with merriment! Leckie retired as gracefully as he could; but for some minutes the sneezing continued—in the auditorium as well as behind the scenes.

An examination of the punkah fringe threw some light on the mystery; it was found to have been plentifully besprinkled with snuff; and, in due course, the murder came out. Some of the younger officers, concluding that the punkah would have been used during the performance, had peppered it copiously with snuff, as a practical joke on the actors, and with a view to enjoying the fun from their seats half way down. However, they never expected their trick to result in so unqualified a success as it did.

H. Hervey.



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Briton or Boer?

By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

INTRODUCTION.

For years past Britain and the Transvaal have been spoiling for a fight, and it was left to that well-known author, Mr. George Griffith, to write this strong and exciting serial nearly four years ago graphically describing a huge war between the two countries.

The story, coming so soon after the Jameson Raid, was read with unusual interest.

Now that Briton and Boer are in deadly conflict it will be interesting to read the story, and see how far the imagination of the author has actually come true.

CHAPTER XXV.

A Perilous Passage.

Furious as he was at the failure of his mission, and completely mystified as to the means by which such a formidable and perfectly equipped force had sprung into existence in the very heart of the country, and taken possession of its most important railway, Captain Eloff nevertheless saw clearly that it would be madness for him to attempt to fight the armoured trains and the two bodies of horse with the few hundred men that were left to him, so he got them together as well as he could, and, putting himself at their head, with one desperate charge burst through Nesbitt's troop, and got clear away in the direction of Krugersdorp.

"It's a pity that chap got away," said Commander Robertson to Nesbitt, when he overtook the train and made his report, rather shamefacedly, although he had really done everything that could be expected of him, "still, Eloff's a fine fellow, and, personally, I am not very sorry. That was a splendid charge, and he deserved it. And even if you could have stopped him it was better not. We've got all our work cut out at Heidelberg, I hope to Heaven they haven't blown up that bridge across the Vaal. If they have we shall have an awful job of it. Still, we have done very well so far, and mustn't grumble. Ah! there go the guns again. Come on, we must be getting ahead."

The reports of the guns in the distance which had drawn his last remark from Commander Robertson came from the advance train and "No. 1," which were already within striking distance of Heidelberg, and from "No. 2," close in their rear.

A very delicate and difficult piece of work had now to be carried out unless the whole expedition was to be overwhelmed in disaster. A few hundred yards below Heidelberg station a bridge crossed a tributary of the Vaal River. This bridge had to be taken and held at all costs. Meanwhile "No. 3" would be forced to wait until the horse had made its way across country, ridden round the town, and forded the river lower down. The two troops could not take machine-guns or artillery with them, as in that case they would not be able to move fast enough.

It was necessary that they should be able to move with perfect freedom and the utmost rapidity, for it was known that there was a large Commando of some three or four thousand Boers with a detachment of the States Artillery stationed at Heidelberg, and therefore the two troops, if encumbered with artillery and ammunition-waggons, would inevitably be cut off by far superior forces before they reached the river. It was also absolutely essential that they should keep in touch with "No. 3," in order to have the support of the unmounted force and artillery.

It was therefore arranged during the brief consultation before the start that the train should run on at a moderate speed while the horse should make straight for the drift which crosses the river about four miles below the town to the eastward.

By the time they got there the other trains would be keeping the Boers busy and thus give them a chance of getting through the drift and gaining the safe side of the bridge.

"I'll do all I can to help you, boys," said Commander Robertson to the two captains, as he remounted the cab of "No. 3's" leading engine; "but you must depend mostly on yourselves. Don't fight if you can help it. Our business is to get through. We'll have fighting enough at the other end. You'll have a scrimmage at the drift, I daresay, so let the horses get their wind a bit before you reach it; then go for it with a rush. That's your only chance. So-long, now, and good luck to you!"

The two captains waved adieu to the train, the troopers cheered it as it moved off, and then at a sharp trot they headed away southward from the railway across the veld for the drift.

Running at the rate of about thirty miles an hour, half-an-hour's run had brought the advance-train within sight of Heidelberg. A single look ahead through his glasses showed Captain Mellish that Heidelberg was already in arms. The sound of the distant firing up the line had warned the Field Cornet in command that there was something wrong, and that battle was in the air. He saw that there was nothing for it but a rush, so with his own hand he pushed the lever over, and let all the steam at his command into the cylinders. The engine plunged forward, and the train rushed towards Heidelberg station at a speed that would have been utterly reckless under any other circumstances.

Looking out from the engine-cab he saw all the signals simultaneously set against him. Of course, he ignored them, and this told the Boers that, wherever it had come from, the train was a hostile one. He saw a swarm of men rush into the station, and others mounting in hot haste all over the town. Bugles rang out their warning notes, and instinct rather than knowledge told him that this was the

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signal for the artillery to turn out, most probably to shell the bridge.

But what concerned him more than all this during those few rapidly fleeting moments was the sight of a couple of gangs of Kaffirs being hurried by white men down either side of the line towards the bridge. Their object was apparent at a glance, for they had pickaxes, shovels, hammers, and iron bars, and any sort of tool that they could pick up at the moment, in their hands.

Worse than this, too, a much larger gang of them was pushing a couple of trucks out of a siding on to the bridge. There was no time for thought; it was a moment in which instinct pure and simple reigned supreme. He shouted to his stokers to pile the coal into the furnace, and held on his way at a speed of something like fifty miles an hour.

As he thundered into the station he waved his hands to the men in command of the guns, but the unspoken order was needless. They knew what was expected, and just as the Boers in the station and about it sent their first volley at the fast-flying train, the harsh, thudding roar of the Maxims, and the deeper toned banging of the Gatlings rolled out, and the train swept on, vomiting flames and smoke and storms of bullets ahead and astern and on both sides of it.

The Kaffirs who were pushing the trucks scattered like sheep, and ran yelling out of the way. The first of the trucks was half-way on the siding and half-way on the line as the buffer and cow-catcher of the engine struck it. The next moment it was smashed to matchwood, and the one behind it was flung a couple of yards off the metals. Simultaneously the gang of Kaffirs which had been going towards the bridge scattered and vanished over the river banks. The train passed the bridge in safety, but pulled up about three-quarters of a mile lower down.

This was the beginning of one of the strangest fights recorded in the history of warfare. The two great, and, in fact, only dangers to be guarded against were: First, changing the points from the station, which it had not struck the Boers to do, and, second, the destruction of the bridge or displacements of the metals on it. Either would have resulted in utter disaster to the trains in the rear of the advance. Hence as each one approached the station, it did so preceded by incessant storms of machine-gun bullets.

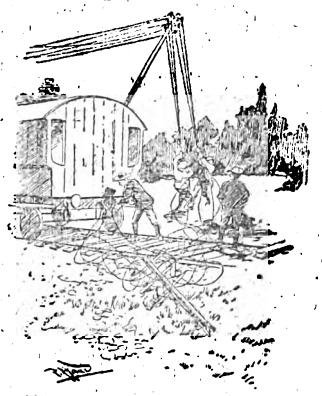
"It's over or into it now. Let her go."

When "No. 3" came up some fifteen minutes later, Commander Robertson halted it about eight hundred yards outside the station, and brought every gun he had and every rifle that had a man to fire it to bear on the station and the buildings immediately about it. A very few seconds of this sort of work sent every Boer who was able to get away under cover. "No. 1" and "No. 2" passed the bridge in comparative safety, although the bullet storm through which they had rushed had ended that journey and all others for many a one of their passengers. Then "No. 3" steamed slowly into the station, vomiting shot and shell and hailstorms of rifle-bullets as it advanced.

Just as it neared the bridge a shell burst in the river-bank, flinging up a cloud of dust and dirt. It had come from the higher part of the town, where a twelve-pounder Krupp field-piece had been got into action. This one had done no harm, but the second might strike the platform of the bridge and break it up, or so far dislodge the rails that it would be impossible for the train to pass without plunging into the river.

"Let her go, Jackson—all the steam you've got; throw her right open. It's over or into it now. Let her go!"

As Commander Robertson shouted this to his engine-driver through the roaring of the guns, the hissing of the steam, and the rumble of the wheels, the fire from the town, which had slackened for a moment as the Boers ran for cover, burst out again with redoubled fury. A detachment of the States Artillery, which had got the first field-gun into action, had now run out two more seven-pounders and a three-pounder Maxim-Nordenfelt, and the concentrated fire of the four guns rained upon the bridge as the train made its dash for it.



The wires were cut and the ends hitched on to the rear of the train.

Every man and woman on the trucks and in the carriages held his or her breath as the decisive moment approached. Gradually the engine gathered speed and rushed forward ever faster and faster either to safety on the other side of the bridge or utter ruin in the river-bed. The bridge seemed ablaze with the flashing of the bursting shells and several of the timbers of the bed were alight. Still, to stop was to risk a fate as bad as could befall even if the bridge were to give way, and so Commander Robertson kept the lever over, and the engine thundered on with its living freight behind it.

When it reached the river-bank it was travelling at nearly forty miles an hour, and at that rate it does not take long to traverse a few hundred feet. Yet, brief as the time was, it was almost too long, for even while the last of the trucks with its load of guns and ammunition was in the middle of the bridge, three shells burst almost simultaneously under the pier next to the station. If it had been the pier at the other end the train would never have got over. As it was, rapidly and all as it was moving, it had barely cleared the bridge before the wrecked pier collapsed, and about a fourth of the structure tumbled bodily into the river.

"A jolly narrow squeak that, Jackson! I don't suppose you'll ever want to be in a tighter place," said Commander Robertson to his engine-driver as the train sped on out of the range of the guns, leaving the ruined bridge behind it.

"No, sir, that's about as close as I want anything. A couple of seconds more would have done it—and wouldn't it just have been a smash! But I suppose that's about the last of it, isn't it? We have only got Terblans and Standerton to run through before we come to Volksrust, and we shall be there before any news can get down the line in front of us."

"Yes, that's about it," replied the leader of the forlorn hope which had thus far gone so prosperously. "But still, we may as well make sure of it. I daresay Mellish has got the wires down ahead of us there, but we had better give no chances. Pull up and we'll have one of those posts down."

As soon as the train was brought to a standstill a rope was passed round one of the iron telegraph posts, and made fast to the engine. Then the engine made a spurt and the post bent and snapped. The wires were cut and the ends hitched on to the rear of the train. Then speed was got up

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again, and in a few minutes a couple of miles of posts and wires were dragged down and hopelessly entangled.

"I reckon they won't send any messages down this line for a few weeks to come," said Commander Robertson when he had given the order for the wires to be cast off. "Now, if only Mellish keeps his eyes open, the others ought to be able to run straight through without much hindrance to the border, and then," he went on, "we shall have a chance of fighting another battle of Majuba. I wonder how Nesbitt and Maclure are getting on in the rear. We mustn't leave them without any supports.

They went into the houses and shot from the windows.

"Pull up at the next siding, Jackson, and we'll split the train. The Netherlands engine must take the passengers and join the other trains. They are quite far enough out of harm's way now. Then we'll run back with the guns to Heidelberg, and keep the beggars busy till the horse can get round through the drift and join us. They ought to be pretty near to it by this time."

As has been said in an earlier chapter, there is nothing that the Boers hate and fear more than novelty either in peace or war. This was the first railway fight they had ever seen or even heard of, and when they saw the armoured trains come rushing through the town and the station, scattering a hurricane of shot and shell and bullets on all sides of them, it is only the simple truth to say that they were absolutely panic-stricken.

No one in Heidelberg had the remotest idea of what had happened in the North, or where these novel incarnations of destruction on wheels had come from. They telegraphed wild inquiries up and down the line, but, of course, no answers came back. A hurried council of war was held, at which opinions were hopelessly divided, and the most extravagant suggestions advanced.

Orders had been received only the day before from headquarters to move down on Standerton that day with all the men, horses, and guns with the exception of a garrison of three hundred men, and empty trains would even then be on their way to convey them. At Standerton the forces of all the Southern districts were concentrating for an immediate advance on Volksrust, the frontier station, from whence the march into Natal, over the old battle-grounds of '81, was to be commenced.

How were the orders to be obeyed now that the bridge was down, and how were they to outstrip those terrible trains which would no doubt be doing the same thing at Standerton as they had done at Heidelberg before they could be ten miles on the road to the South? In the midst of a noisy and fruitless discussion of such questions as these the council of war was put a sudden stop to by the news that one of the trains had returned and was about to open fire on the town, and almost immediately after this came a second report that a large body of horse had been sighted to the south-east heading for the drifts on the old transport road.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Last Rush for Freedom.

Commander Robertson, knowing that everything depended on rapidity of action, lost no time in getting to work. He had got rid of his passengers now and his train was a fighting one pure and simple, armoured from end to end, and filled with guns, ammunition, and armed men. Hence he could afford to take risks which he would not have been just fied in entering upon with several hundred women and children under his charge.

He pulled the train up about six hundred yards from the ruined bridge, on a curve which enabled him to present only the rear end of it to the artillery fire of the enemy. Then he trained his two seven-pounders and the three-pounder Maxim-Nordenfelt on to the "plein" or open space in which the guns of the States Artillery could be seen.

He had about eight hundred men packed into his trucks, all armed with Lee-Metford magazine rifles. These he disembarked and sent down to the river on either side of the line with orders to open and keep up an incessant fire on the town and the station as soon as the first shell was fired from the seven-pounders.

His object was, of course, to keep the Boers in the town so busily engaged that they would have neither heart nor leisure to oppose with any considerable force the passage of the Johannesburg Horse through the drift.

His strategy was perfectly successful. The quick-firing Maxim-Nordenfelt dropped its three-pound mélinite shells so truly and so rapidly about the guns in the plein that their carriages were shattered to bits before the artillerists could get them away. Meanwhile, the seven-pounder shells kept bursting here and there and everywhere about the town, and the moment any considerable number of Boers gathered in the streets or ventured out to take a position along the opposite river-bank, the Maxim spoke, and a brief storm of bullets decimated and dispersed them.

Within ten minutes the town was practically at his mercy. Saving for the fiasco of Doornkop the Boers had never had to face machine gun fire before, and a very little of it went a long way with them. Two or three times the streets that were open to the line of fire were swept, and then they went into the houses and contented themselves with shooting from such windows as looked out towards the train.

As soon as he saw that this was the case, Commander Robertson detached three hundred men and sent them down to the drift to assist the passage of the horse. He also got out a light Maxim, which had not been mounted, and which four men could easily carry with its tripod-stand, and sent it down with a score of boxes of ammunition. About a thousand of the Boers had ridden out on the other side of the town with the object of cutting the Johannesburghers off from the drift, but so much time had been wasted in panic and divided councils that the two troops were already within half a mile of the drift and the three hundred riflemen and the Maxim were in position before they could strike an effective blow.

As they rode out of the town in a fairly dense body the Maxim got on to them at two thousand yards, and the moment the range was found a brief torrent of bullets was poured into the midst of them. When the Maxim stopped Captains Nesbitt and Maclure took the hint, poured in a volley, and charged in two divisions.

The Boers, believing, not without reason, that they had ridden into a trap, scattered like sheep, and made the best of their way back into the town, followed by a second volley from the rifles and another brief tornado from the Maxim. Then the two troops drew up again and rode laughing and cheering into the water, and cleared the drift without losing a man or a horse.

The Maxim was picked up, and horse and foot started at a run and a trot for the train. The other squad of riflemen was recalled by a whistle from the engine, and the disgusted and discomfited Boers had the satisfaction of seeing their strange and terrible assailants disappear round the curve on their way to do no one knew what damage in the South.

Commandant Meyer stamped and stormed with rage, but it was impossible to do anything until more guns could be brought down. Even if he could have persuaded his

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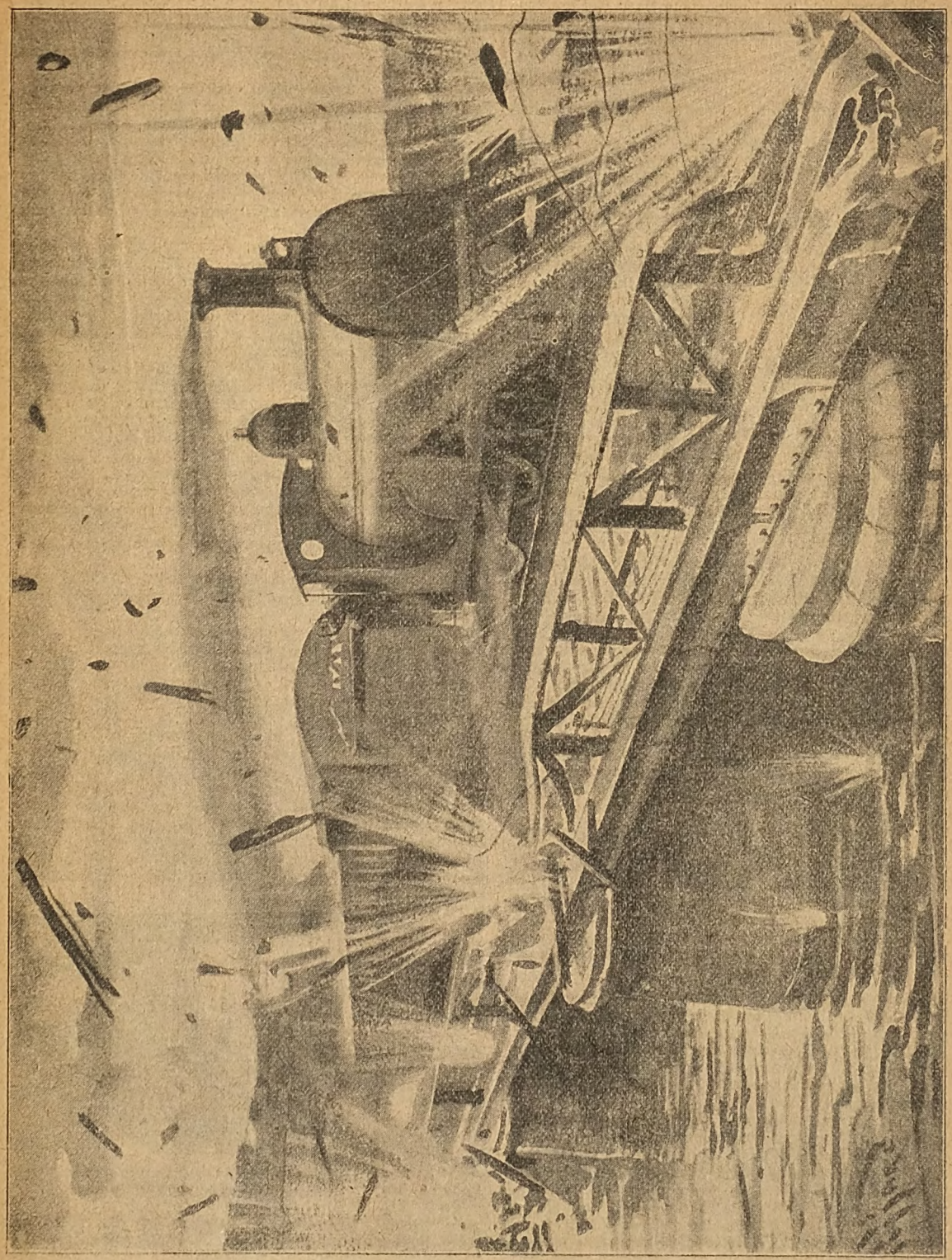

The bridge seemed ablaze with the flashing of the bursting shells.

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thoroughly demoralised men to cross the river and pursue the train on horseback the only result would have been destruction, for without cover on the open veld they would never have got within half a mile of the muzzles of the machine-guns, so all he could do was to send mounted messengers to the North to convey the tidings of swift and incomprehensible disaster, and await further orders and reinforcements of artillery from headquarters.

Commandant Meyer stamped and stormed with rage.

By nightfall the train and the two troops of horses reached Terblans without further adventure. They found the town and station already in possession of "No. 1" and "No. 2," and, to the Commander's great delight, they also found on the sidings the two empty trains of trucks which had been sent up from Standerton to bring down the men and guns from Heidelberg. As rapidly as it could be done the wearied horses and men of the two troops were put into the trucks after the former had been watered and fed as well as the resources of the temporarily captured town would allow.

While this was being done a council of war had been held and a very pretty little scheme for outwitting the enemy at Standerton had been evolved. Considering the large number of Boers concentrated there and the fact that the Vaal River is crossed to the south of the town by a long bridge which could be very easily blown up before the now lengthy procession of trains could get over, it was decided to risk everything on the success of a single stratagem.

Given that the line was clear, the bridge intact, and the Boer commanders unsuspicious, it would be possible to rush the station and cross the bridge before the trick was discovered. Consequently a telegram was dispatched in Dutch to Colonel and Commandant Lukas Meyer, brother of the Commandant at Heidelberg, as though it had come from him at that station:

"Imperative orders received from Commandant-General, Pretoria, to proceed at once with all speed to frontier. Large numbers of English troops landed at Durban and coming up to Charlestown. Obeying these orders, I shall pass through Standerton to Volksrust without stopping, taking all available men and guns with me. Please have line clear, that there may be no interruption. Am ordered to ask you to follow as soon as possible to join in general attack on Charlestown to-morrow."

Meanwhile the engines were taking in water and coal, and everything was being got ready for the last rush of the strange journey, and as each train was ready, it moved out of the station in the same order as before. The telegraph office, of course, had been already seized, but as a further precaut on the wires were pulled down before "No. 3" left to bring up the rear.

It is about forty miles by rail from Terblans to Standerton, and a little over eighty to Volksrust. The iron horses were kept well in hand until the lights of Standerton station, which lies at some little distance above the town, were sighted across the wide, open grass veld. To the delight of the commander, the green lights said "all clear." The stratagem had worked so far. Three short, sharp whistles gave the signal "full speed" to the other engine-drivers; the trains quickened up one after the other, and, with about two hundred yards interval between each of them, rushed down the slight incline at a speed which soon reached nearly fifty miles an hour.

Meanwhile two men on the rear truck of "No. 3" were busily fitting detonators and fuses to two twelve-pound boxes of dynamite.

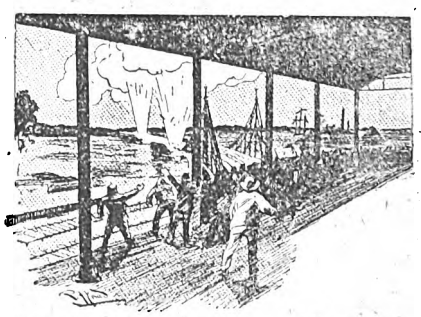
As the advance-train rushed, with its whistle screaming, through the station, those on board it saw the platform crowded with people, who raised a hoarse cheer as they passed. It vanished into the darkness beyond. Another and another and another rushed after it, and then came "No. 3." As the rear truck reached the end of the bridge the boxes of dynamite, which were now hanging over the end of the truck by ropes, with fuses already lighted, were let go.

"No. 3" vanished after the rest. All had passed, as it were, in the twinkling of an eye. The Boers had stood and watched the six trains roar through the station without the remotest suspicion of the truth. It was too dark and the speed was too great for them to see anything more than that the trains were composite and that some of them were armed and loaded with men and horses.

But as the roar of their wheels was dying away in the distance they saw two brilliant flashes of flame blaze out in the middle of the bridge. At the same instant there came the crash of an explosion which convulsed the atmosphere about them, and smashed every window in the station. They saw the dim shape of the bridge twist up and collapse, apparently just in its centre, and when some of them ran out into the darkness to see what had happened, they found only a contorted mass of rent and twisted rails and girders, and a wide, black gap, under which the yellow waters of the rain-swollen Vaal were roaring and surging in an impassible torrent.

Then it began to dawn upon them that something very strange had happened, and that some incomprehensible disaster had befallen them. Commandant Meyer, half beside himself with rage and bewilderment, telegraphed to his brother at Heidelberg, and then flashed a warning down to Volksrust, but, of course, no answer came back, for by that time the wires were already down in both directions.

By a strange coincidence the events which have just been narrated took place on the day and night of the 2nd of January, that is to say, on the anniversary of Doornkop, and simultaneously with the rout of Commandant Cronje's men at Buluwayo, and his surrender to General Carrington's column at Figtree Fort, on the road to the Mangwe Pass. It was shortly after sundown on the same memorable day that a mounted messenger from Buluwayo overtook the column, and handed the General a lengthy telegram from Salisbury, conveying the startling but welcome information that communication with Chimoyo had been suddenly restored, and that Her Majesty's ships *Edgar* and *Grafton*, convoying the two big Bucknall liners, *Johannesburg* and *Fort Salisbury*, filled with Imperial troops and stores, had arrived at Beira from Delagoa Bay.



They saw two brilliant flashes of flame blaze out in the middle of the bridge.

The Imperial troops, including a battalion of the Leicestershire Regiment under Captain Pearson, four companies of Mounted Infantry, and a detachment of the York and Lancaster Regiment under Colonel Alderson, with a strong

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naval brigade with light artillery, machine guns, and ample stores, had been landed, and would push on to Umtali with all practicable speed, and would march from thence on Buluwayo or Fort Victoria, as might be found most advisable, after receipt of advices from him. Then followed a succinct account of what had happened in Delagoa Bay, and the telegram concluded with the hope that the Matabele campaign would be concluded by the time the two columns joined hands and started southward to attack the Boers.

The delight that this good news awoke in the breast of every Loyalist who had been fighting so well and so long for the honour of the flag in Rhodesia may be easily imagined, and great were the rejoicings that night all along the road from Buluwayo to Mangwe.

General Carrington at once dictated a reply to the dispatch, requesting that the troops should proceed direct to Buluwayo. The railway from Mafeking had been completed as far as Palapye, and ample supplies for the rainy season had been got up before the wires were cut, so there had been abundance of food in the North for a month past. Hence there need be no fears of scarcity even when the other column arrived.

The General and his assistant officers made their dispositions for the next campaign with their usual decision and dispatch. All the serviceable horses that the Boer prisoners had left were promptly appropriated. So many as were wanted were taken as remounts for the troops, and the rest were sent on up the road to Gwelo to meet the coming column and help it along.

Commandant Cronje and his men were sent off well guarded to the South, and, to their intense disgust, were set to work, some as bullock drivers and transport-riders, and others as labourers on the line. It was, of course, impossible to send them back into the Transvaal, and it was equally unreasonable to allow them to eat their heads off in idleness. When Commandant Cronje protested against the indignity, he was curtly reminded of the fact that he had made *his* prisoners at Potchefstroom work in the trenches after he knew that an armistice had been concluded, and that hostilities were at an end.

The greater part of the column then moved southward, and within a week they had reached Palapye, where General Carrington formed an entrenched camp, in which he had decided to await the arrival of the column from the North before resuming the offensive, and either striking straight at the Transvaal through Fort Elebi, or moving down in force on Mafeking to retake the railway and join hands with the Cape Colonial forces.

CHAPTER XXVII.

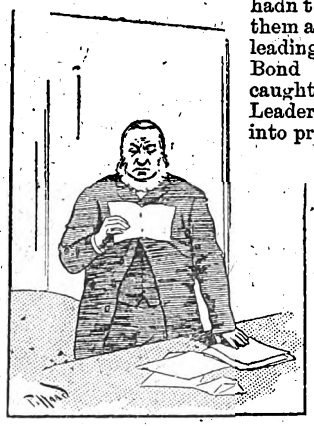
BOERS IN COUNCIL.

A FORTNIGHT had passed since the strange, and, as it appeared to those most interested in it, almost miraculous, exodus of the Johannesburgers from the ruins of the Golden City, and a full month had gone by since the carefully hatched conspiracy between the Boers and the disloyal Dutch of the British colonies had been brought to a head by the proclamation of President Krüger on Independence Day.

According to all prophesies and calculations, which had been very freely, and in fact openly, made since the Transvaal and the Free State had begun to arm themselves after the Jameson raid, the British ought, by this time, to have been swept into the sea or reduced to the position of the Outlanders of Johannesburg, and the new flag of the United States of South Africa ought to have been flying from the flagstaff on Government House at Cape Town.

The good unsophisticated burghers, most of whom remembered the easy triumphs of the War of Independence, and who had taught their sons to look upon fighting the English as rather easier sport than shooting buck, were beginning to ask their leaders very awkward questions.

How was it that most of the shooting that had been done had been on the other side? Why had the English been allowed to rush through their country on trains that were like forts on wheels, and which spread death and destruction all about them and wrecked all the bridges behind them? What had become of the Commando that had gone into the North under Pieter Cronje to take Rhodesia for the Transvaal and hang Cecil Rhodes on the nearest tree? Why hadn't the Free State risen with them at first; and why had all the leading members of the Africander Bond allowed themselves to be caught as easily as the Reform Leaders had been and clapped into prison?



The President was at the end of a long table.

These questions and a good many others like them the good burghers found very much easier to ask than the President and his Executive, including even the astute State Secretary himself, found them to answer. There were nearly thirty thousand burghers under arms in the Transvaal alone. The re-organised States Artillery to the number of three thousand, of whom at least a thousand had served in the German army, was as efficient as drill, manœuvring, expensive equipment, and new uniforms could make it. They had plenty of guns and immense stores of ammunition, and yet the war, which by this time ought to have been over, had apparently only just begun.

It had been confidently said in the highest quarters that fifty thousand British soldiers would only make a nice breakfast for the Boers. Why had they not come, and why were the Boers still hungering for their breakfast?

To the unsophisticated minds of the simple burghers these were very hard questions indeed, but to their rulers they were not quite so obscure. In fact, the new year was hardly a fortnight old when the answers to some of them at least began to make themselves unpleasantly plain, as we shall presently see if we take the liberty of being present in the spirit at a Council of State which was held in the Executive Chamber at Pretoria on the evening of the 15th of January.

The President was at the end of a long table. Opposite to him was Vice President and Commandant-General Piet Joubert, at the President's right sat the State Secretary, handsome as ever, but scarcely so *débonnaire* as he had been at the ball at the Rand Club; and in other armchairs round the table sat some half-dozen other men of light and leading in the councils of Boerland.

There was Gert Johannes van Niekerk, a thick-set, handsome man, with a long, dark beard slightly streaked with grey, a well-moulded nose, and bright, dark eyes. In his day he had been a doughty raider like Jameson, and had made himself President of Stellaland until Sir Charles Warren came and turned him out. Now he was Chief Commissioner of Police, a son-in-law of Oom Paul, and one of his most trusted advisers.

Next to him sat Lukas Meyer, known as the Lion of Vryheid, a magnificent man standing some six feet four in his boots, with thick, black hair and beard, and looking his name every inch of him. Opposite to them sat Lieutenant-Colonel Henning Pretorious, Commandant of Artillery, a well-built, dark-faced, grizzled man. Next to him sat, facing the State Secretary, no less a personage than Prince Paul Regna himself, his slight, perfectly attired form and keen, high-bred features forming a contrast to the heavily

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built, carelessly-attired Boer councillors, as strange as the fact of his presence in the room.

What was he of all men doing there?

The answer is very simple. The capture of the Russian squadron in Delagoa Bay, the sudden and complete stoppage of all communication between the Transvaal and the outside world, and the wholly unexpected events that had taken place in the interior during the last three weeks or so had convinced him that the policy which he had come to the Transvaal to pursue would have to be entirely changed.

He had, therefore, removed about half of the diplomatic mask from his countenance; in other words, he had shown the State Secretary his credentials from the Court of Petersburg, and such of his instructions as would suffice to lead that astute if somewhat inexperienced diplomatist to believe that Russia, through him, was prepared to step into the place left vacant by Germany, who, as it appeared, had never sent her fleet at all, and had manifestly backed out of the secret alliance the moment that it was a case of expending men and money, and risking European complications for the sake of the freedom of the Transvaal. This the State Secretary had communicated to his colleagues of the Executive, and the present council had been convened mainly, if not wholly, to consider this new development.

At the time that we may suppose ourselves to have entered the room, they had been considering it for some two or three hours, at far greater length than it could possibly be set down here; but in the result Prince Paul had so astounded them by the amazing knowledge which he evidently possessed of the inmost intricacies of European diplomacy, including all of their own affairs which they thought most secret, that they had ended by taking him at his own valuation, and accepting the offers of moral and material aid which, as he assured them, his Imperial master had commanded him to make, should the course of events render such a step advisable.

This done, the Council proceeded to the discussion of internal affairs, and on the Prince offering to withdraw, the State Secretary had suggested that he should favour them by remaining and helping them, should occasion offer, with his deeper knowledge and wider experience.

Meyer replied by making the table jump with a blow from his huge fist.

The first subject that came up was the disquieting news which had just come in from the North, and was not yet known save to the Council, and, it may be added, to the Prince. It had come in the form of a letter from General Carrington, containing an enclosure from Commandant Cronje. The letter was dated from "The British camp, Palapye," and had been brought across country by three of the Boers who had been taken prisoners at the Figtree Fort. Many rumours had come in, but this, from the hands of the enemy, was the first precise account of the disaster that had befallen the Northern Commando. The General drily and tersely put the facts in such a way that there was not the slightest possibility of mistaking his meaning. He was in deadly earnest, and evidently intended to push the advantage he had gained to the uttermost.

He began by stating that the men who were now his prisoners had entered Her Majesty's dominions without any declaration of war in a time of peace. That they had taken the lives of British subjects, and destroyed or confiscated their property. He had, therefore, decided to hold them as hostages for the safety of the unarmed British subjects in the Transvaal. He would exchange them against twice their number of British subjects of whom at least half must be women and children, and who must be conducted to the frontier of the Portuguese territory and handed over to the British officer in command there, so that they might be conveyed by sea to the south. Failing this he would keep them as labourers at such work as they could earn their keep by till the end of the war.

The enclosure from Commandant Cronje drew a pitiable picture of the free-born burghers being forced to labour like Kaffirs, and strongly urged the exchange.

When the President had finished reading the letters he dashed them down upon the table and cried in a voice thick with passion:

"Soh! we are to make terms with these accursed *rooineks* already, are we? Our burghers have let them take them prisoners and we are to give women and children for them. That is not the way we did in '80 and 81. *We* took the prisoners and made the terms then. No, let them stop and work if they did not know how to fight. *Allermacht!* we want men who can fight. What say you, Piet Joubert?"

The Vice-President stroked his white beard and looked for a moment or two at nothingness out of his keen, cunning eyes. Then he said:

"No. Let the men come back. They can ride and they can shoot. There are more than a thousand of them. We shall want them, and we are better without the women and children. What do you think, Van Niekerk? Is that not so?"

"*Ja*, that is so," said the Commissioner of Police, slowly. "*Ja*, we want the men, Oom Paul. We have not done well so far, and this is not going to be a business like '81. Our men do not shoot as straight as they did then, and the *rooineks* shoot straighter. They have learnt many things, too, since then—more than our people have. See how they got through Meyer's men at Standerton. Ei, that was a slim trick!"

The Lion's face flushed dusky red at this allusion to an exceedingly sore subject. The amenities of European diplomacy are not very strictly observed in Pretoria, and Lukas Meyer replied by making the table jump with a blow from his huge fist and saying in a tone that was almost a shout:

"Slim trick! *Groot Gott!* What about the trick the *rooineks* played you here? What were you doing while they got out of Johannesburg—stole your trains and blew up Elandsfontein? What were they doing at Germiston and Heidelberg——"

"Soh, soh, softly, softly!" said the President, suddenly interrupting. His own gust of passion had passed now, and he obviously wanted no words wasted in re-crimination.

"Let me speak; I have been thinking. We must crush this Carrington, or he will pierce our side from the west; we must break him before he grows too strong. These men who brought the letter shall take another back, telling Carrington that we will do as he says, and that we are even now sending the women and children to Delagoa. And they shall tell Cronje that we are sending him an escort of five thousand burghers with artillery and maxims to bring him back.

"We have the railway to Shoshong, only fifty miles away from them, and we have plenty of men on the border. Then we must rouse the Free Staters and the burghers of the Cape, and we will take Fourteen Streams while they attack Kimberley. We have talked too much and fought too little; now we will begin to fight—and we will fight, fight, fight as long as there is a *rooinek* or a *rooibaatje* in the land.

"I have told Steyn that the English are fortifying

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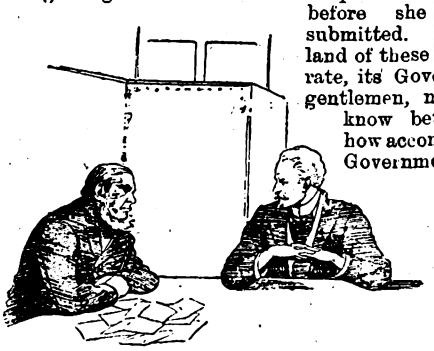
Amajuba and Laing's Nek, and have closed the Passes of the Drakensberg, and are giving the Basutos arms and stirring them up to invade his country and slaughter his people, and he has answered that the Free State burghers will move when we move, and when they move those who are faithful to us in the Cape will move, too. So now we will move, *ja*, every one of us, for this business must be finished before more men come from England and other places."

"I don't think there is very much fear of that, your Honour," said Doctor Leyds, when the President had finished his little harangue. "For the present at least England is absolutely crippled; she dare not send another regiment or a single ship. Is not that so, Prince?"

"England," said the Prince, addressing the President in wonderfully fluent Dutch, "is at present so far involved in complications both in Europe and elsewhere that your Honour need have no fear of any English intervention for at least six months.

"If," he went on with a note of polite sarcasm in his tone, "we were dealing with the England of Pitt or Palmerston, or even of Beaconsfield, it might be different. If the Concert of the Powers had presented their joint Note, intimating that if the South African Question were made an Imperial one and the might of the Empire were used to crush the Republics and cancel the promises made after Amajuba, to the England of those days she would have flung her glove in the face of Europe and fought the world before she would have submitted. But the England of these days, or at any rate, its Government—well, gentlemen, no one should know better than you how accommodating that Government can be."



"If we were dealing with the England of Pitt or Palmerston, or even of Beaconsfield, it might be different."

"*Ja!*" said the President with a gruff laugh. "If I could only get a message to Chamberlain I would make him take that Carrington and all the Government *rooibaatjes* away and call the ships home, and after that the work would be easy."

(*To be continued.*)

KRUGER WON'T LAUGH

. . When our Guns are Trained on Pretoria!

WHEN WILL THAT BE?

£250 will be given to the reader of PEARSON'S WEEKLY from whom we receive a Coupon bearing the exact date upon which the

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If two competitors name the exact day the money will go to the one who gives the correct hour of that day. If two or more give the correct day and hour the £250 in full will go to him whose coupon we received bearing the earliest date of sending in. Pretoria time, which is about an hour and three quarters in advance of English time, must be stated.

The Editor's decision must be final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding.

The Editor reserves the right to close this competition at a day's notice.

Address all envelopes to "War Editor," Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Pretoria Coupon, S.S.] *May 5, 1900.*

Name.....

Address.....

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Day..... *Hour*.....

(Pretoria Time.)

We shall take it that competitors mean the year 1900 unless they state otherwise.

This notice and coupon also appears every week in the ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY NEWS, HOME NOTES, THE SUNDAY READER, PEARSON'S WEEKLY, and the BIG BUDGET.

Readers of SHORT STORIES may enter with this Coupon.

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "Three Men and Mr. Frank Caldwell," by W. Pett Ridge, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. A. Butterfield, 31 Manchester Road, Nelson, Lancashire. Attempts for this week's prize may deal with ANY SUBJECT and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, May 7th. Post-cards only, please.

His Reminder.

IN the counting-house of a certain city office, usually closed at six o'clock, the office boy—not a new one, either—has been known, like others of his fraternity, to occasionally forget to do those things which he ought to have done, and the manager at last had to impress upon him the advisability of making a note of anything important on a memorandum form and keeping it in a conspicuous place on his desk as a reminder.

The other day a piece of paper was noticed pinned to the wall in front of the lad's desk, and upon examination, it was found to bear the following:

"Memorandum. Leave at six."

A. B.

Kismet and Fate.

A LADY living in a fashionable quarter has a bit of statuary bearing the inscription "Kismet."

The housemaid was dusting the room one day, when her mistress came in.

"Shure, madam, what's the maning of the 'riting on the bottom of this?" asked the maid, referring to the inscription on the statue.

"Kismet means 'fate.'" replied the mistress.

Bridget was limping painfully when out with her sweetheart not long afterwards, and he asked:

"What's the matter, Bridget?"

"Faith," was the answer, "I have the most terrible korns on me kismet." F. T. D.

The Ghost's Moustache.

SCIENTISTS say that the hair and nails grow after death. Some theory of that sort is needed to explain the experience of a widow at a spiritualistic séance.

"No," said the little widow emphatically. "I will never attend another dark séance."

"Why not?" asked her friend. "Didn't you have any acquaintances among the spooks?"

"I am in doubt about the materialisations."

"Not distinct enough?"

"Well, it was like this: The medium said my husband was there, and wanted to speak to me. It was too dark to see him plainly, but I thought I recognised the outlines of Jim, and I kissed him."

"Was it Jim?"

"That's what I would like to know."

"What makes you doubt it?"

"The spook had a lovely moustache."

"Oh!"

"Jim never had one." And the little widow looked thoughtful. A. T. B.

So Sorry!

AT an evening party lately, the hostess had bustled out of the room to arrange some detail of supper or something. During her absence a young man, who had protested all the evening, sang a sentimental ballad—to the intense agony of the company.

The hostess returned after he had finished, and knew nothing about his singing. As he had to leave early, he approached to make his farewell.

"Good-night!" said the hostess, with the usual excess of amiability. "Good-night! I'm so sorry you can't sing."

The young man crimsoned and fled.

A. H.

Wild Behind.

A CONSCIENTIOUS sportsman purchased a mule that was warranted sound and quiet.

He rose from the ground very shortly afterwards with the severest reasons for doubting the latter qualifications.

"You said the mule was quite tame," the buyer observed.

"And so he is tame, isn't he?" asked the dealer.

"Not altogether—only partially so," the discontented purchaser replied; "he is tame in front, I daresay, but he is desperately wild behind." M. L.

Turned the Tables.

A WELL-KNOWN professor sometimes becomes so much interested in his lecture that the class is kept about a quarter of an hour over the proper time.

Certain restless spirits amongst the students once thought they would give him a gentle hint, so they bought an alarm-clock, set it to go off precisely at noon, and placed it on the professor's desk when they came in to the next lecture. They knew that he was a little absent-minded, and expected that he would not notice it.

As the noon hour struck the alarm went off with a crash, and those of the class not in the secret started and took in the joke at once. There was a round of applause.

The professor waited till the alarm and applause were over, and then said:

"Gentlemen, I thank you for this little gift. I had forgotten it was my birthday. An alarm-clock is something my wife has needed for a long time for our servant, whose nocturnal slumbers are rather heavy. It is a very kind remembrance on your part."

The professor then finished his demonstration.

J. W. K.

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Drilled with Poles.

At a certain Board school in the North of England the children had been moved from the infants into Standard I., and were being, for the first time, drilled with music.

The teacher showed them what they had to do, and the children commenced to do it accompanied by the piano.

However, they had not got far in the exercise when they stopped, many of them bursting with laughter.

"Whatever is the matter?" ejaculated the teacher, "have you never drilled with music before?"

"No, sir," replied one of the boys, "please, sir, we drilled with poles."

J. N.

At it Yet.

One Sunday the minister of a small northern country parish church had the misfortune to forget his sermon, and did not discover his loss till he reached the church.

Suddenly an idea struck him.

He sent for John, the beadle, and told him to give out the 119th psalm (containing 176 verses), whilst he hurried home for his sermon.

On his journey back to church he saw the faithful beadle standing at the church door waving his arms and shouting at him. On reaching the door, he exclaimed:

"Are they all singing yet, John?"

"Ay, sir," replied John, "they're at it yet, but they're cheepin' like sparries."

T. S.

Legal Repartee.

A certain doctor had occasion, when only a beginner in the medical profession, to attend a trial as a witness. The opposing counsel, in cross-examining the young physician, made several sarcastic remarks, doubting the ability of so young a man to understand his business. Finally he asked:

"Do you know the symptoms of concussion of the brain?"

"I do," replied the doctor.

"Well," continued the attorney, "suppose my learned friend, Mr. Baging, and myself were to bang our heads together, should we get concussion of the brain?"

"Your learned friend, Mr. Baging, might," said the doctor.

W. L. T.

Not So Slow There, Either.

Down in the country the other day, I took a vehicle at a country station to ride inland a few miles. The driver was disposed to be quite communicative.

"You don't live round here, I s'pose?" he remarked interrogatively.

"No—not now," I replied. "I'm from London."

"Pretty big place, ain't it?" he continued.

"Yes, it's a large city," I said.

"I s'pose there's something goin' on there most of the time, ain't there?" he asked.

I nodded affirmatively.

"Well, we ain't so slow down here," he added. "Had a dance in the village schools last night, and there'll be a school treat Tuesday!"

J. W. N.

A Desperate Debtor.

Many years ago a man carried to a bank in the Midlands that had recently failed, some bills which it had issued, and demanded gold and silver for them. The cashier replied that the bank did not pay gold and silver.

"Give me, then," said he, "notes of the Bank of England."

"We have none."

"Then give me bills on any bank in England."

"We have none of them."

The man, growing desperate, exclaimed:

"Pay me, then, in the best counterfeit bills you have!"

H. K.

Quite Ready.

Presence of mind is not always monopolised by the brave and wise, nor is it uniformly cultivated for great and good purposes.

Several of the pupils in a certain small private school determined that the study of geography was as unnecessary as it was irksome. The teacher, however, differed on this point, and accordingly called one of the eldest boys to his desk and spoke to him about the necessity of a knowledge of his own and other countries.

"I shan't learn g'ography till I'm ready," growled the youngster.

The teacher rose quickly and seized him by the collar, intending to shake him, when the young rascal hastily added:

"But I'm quite ready now."

T. A. V.

Is It a Pleasure to Do Nothing?

A clever boy, afterwards a celebrated barrister, was in his school-days both lazy and insubordinate. The masters were all in despair, and the cause was laid before the superior. He called the boy to his room and said:

"My lad, you do not like to work; would you really like to do nothing?"

"Indeed I should," said the boy. "I hate work."

"Very well," said the superior, "you can stay in my room and do nothing—mind, absolutely nothing."

For an hour and a half the lazy boy enjoyed the rest, then he put out his hand for a book.

"Oh, no," said the superior; "reading is doing something—you must not read."

Another half hour passed, then Master Berryer began to talk.

"Oh, no," said the superior; "talking is doing something—you cannot talk."

At the end of three hours the superior left his desk and went into the grounds. The boy followed him, and, seeing his companions playing at the distance, he was about to join them.

"Oh, no," said the superior; "playing is doing something—you must not play, and indeed, you ought not to be here, for walking is doing something, so you must not walk."

Master Berryer was conquered, and from henceforth there were no complaints of him in the school, and in his future life he was certainly not one of those who did nothing.

R. W. M.

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The Reward of Knight Errantry.

EVERYBODY knew that Mrs. Martin had a powerful and romantic imagination, and that was what led many of her friends and acquaintances to say that they believe the whole thing to be an offspring of that imagination.

They said this among themselves and they were careful not to allow Mrs. Martin to know that they said it; for, although she was undeniably romantic, it was not fair to accuse her of romancing.

But here is the whole story, and when you have read it you can judge for yourselves.

Martin was sitting in his arm chair rather late one evening, moodily smoking a cigar. His wife had been away on a two days' visit to some friends at Guildford and was to return that evening, but she had omitted to let her husband know by which train she would arrive at Waterloo and he was consequently obliged to wait in uncertainty at home for her arrival.

He was getting fidgety and gnawing the end of his cigar rather angrily, when he heard a ring at the bell.

Before he could remove his feet from the inside of the fender and get to the door, the maid had answered the ring and Mrs. Martin had bustled into the room, narrowly escaping her beloved husband as she pushed open the door.

"Oh!" Mrs. Martin emitted a little scream as she nearly collided with her husband. "I'm so dreadfully nervous to-night, John. I've had such an adventure!"

She permitted herself to fall heavily into a chair and drop her bag on the floor.

John sat down in his own chair and looked at her anxiously.

"Take off your things, dear, and tell me all about it. Now, don't give way!" he went on as Elaine showed signs of lapsing into a swoon. "Brace yourself up a little, my dear, and have a glass of wine. What has happened?"

Elaine recovered her self-possession by an effort and proceeded to divest herself of her outdoor garments and to fortify her nerves by a glass of wine. By the time these preliminaries had been concluded, she was in a sufficiently calm condition to narrate what had happened.

"I didn't wish to trouble you to meet me, John," she began, "so I said nothing about the time the train would arrive—and to tell you the truth, I really didn't know what time I should start; Julia never will let me come away till the last minute, and the dear children——"

"Did it happen down at Guildford?" interrupted John who had not the same enthusiastic opinion of the "dear children," and wanted his wife to get to the point.

"No, John," returned Elaine, a little stiffly. "It was after I had left Waterloo and was finding my way to Charing Cross District Station. I can't think why on earth you say that it is easier to go over Hungerford Bridge—it's much more simple to go some other way; I always have a trouble over it and so to-night I lost my way and goodness knows where I got to.

"I hadn't the slightest notion that I was going wrong, and I was just thinking what a darling boy Willie is growing, when two men sprang out upon me in a dark street. One man tried to grab my bag, and the other—the wretch!"

"He did?" exclaimed John, half rising from his seat.

"Yes, my dear, he actually tried to kiss me! But I made a scratch at his face with one hand and kept a tight hold on my bag with the other. And then he came up."

"Who?" demanded John, dropping back into his chair.

"A handsome, well-dressed young fellow about twenty-five, John," continued Mrs. Martin warmly. "I don't know where he came from, but in about two seconds he had knocked one of the ruffians flat on the ground and was shaking the life out of the other one. And he did it all in the most polite way you could imagine, John. He stood on the prostrate rascal, held the other tightly by the collar and took off his hat to me.

"'Shall I give them in charge, madam?' he asked me deferentially. 'If you charge them, you will have to appear at the police court to prosecute and that may be distasteful to you. Or shall I give them both a good shaking and let them go?'

"Of course, I did not like the idea of appearing in a police court, so I told him to let them go. He bowed in the most gentlemanly manner, got off the fallen man, lifted him up by his collar—still holding the other, then gave them a good kick and told them to run. They did run.

"I was very much flurried and didn't know which way to turn to get to the station. I set off in the opposite direction—that is, John, I was just going back to Waterloo. He noticed this and asked me—just like a

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knight of old—if he could assist me by pointing out the right way to reach my destination. Of course I accepted his chivalrous offer and he told me which way to go.

"'If you will permit me, madam,' he said politely—you have no idea, John, how exceedingly polite he was—'I will walk a few feet behind you. I am going to the station myself and shall be able to see that you reach it safely.'

"I allowed him to do so and he kept three or four yards behind me; I know this because I had a look at him out of the corner of my eye whenever I turned from one street to another. At last we reached the bridge and he came a little nearer to me. When we were on the other side, he spoke to me again and cautioned me to be careful how I descended the steps as they were rather slippery. He suggested with the utmost deference that I should lean upon his arm; and as I did nearly slip on the steps, John, dear, I was glad of his assistance. On arriving at the booking-office he took off his hat, bowed profoundly and took leave.

"I was more than thankful, I can tell you, when I found myself in the train and on my way home. Wasn't that an adventure?"

"H'm!" was John's only reply.

Perhaps it was because he still had his cigar in his mouth. But Elaine was not well pleased and the conversation fell rather flat during the remainder of the evening. In fact, beyond saying that he was glad she had come to no harm, John did not again refer to the subject.

The next morning Mr, John Martin left for the office about nine o'clock as usual. He lighted a cigar and it seemed that his gloves gave him a lot of trouble to put on. Then, he had to hold his umbrella also.

Probably it was due to this combination of circumstances that he made no reply to his wife's remarks as she accompanied him to the door.

Elaine appeared to have recovered from the annoyance she had felt on the previous evening at her husband's reception of the news, and she talked volubly about the paper she intended to read before the local Literary Society on "Modern Chivalry."

"I think I shall have time to write that paper to-day, dear," she rattled on as she walked round him to see if there were any mud spots or dust which had not been brushed off. "I think that adventure of mine yesterday evening will serve as a splendid opening. If ever there was an instance of modern chivalry, that was one. Don't you think so?"

The dust seemed to get into John's throat, for he coughed and did not reply.

"You don't seem to think so, John," went on Elaine, again feeling a little hurt. "But I suppose it is too much to expect of all men. You wouldn't do anything of that kind."

And for the first time since their marriage they parted without the morning kiss.

Mrs. Martin had several things to attend to during the morning and it was not till the afternoon that she had time to begin her paper on "Modern Chivalry."

The opening sentences gave her a little trouble, but as soon as she began the narration of her adventure she warmed to the work and her pen went swiftly over the foolscap.

As she wrote, she fancied that she could hear the murmurs of applause that would come from her audience —especially from the ladies, and when she laid down her pen with a sigh of satisfaction she was convinced that the reading of that essay would do a great deal to [illegible]

Seven o'clock was John's time for reaching home and it was seldom that he was late; occasionally some business matter would detain him, but he generally knew of this on the previous day and gave his wife due notice.

On the evening in question she confidently expected him at the regular time, but no John appeared. She concluded that by some mischance he had lost the train, which would make him half an hour late.

Twenty minutes passed, and to while away the time she took her essay and began to read it through. As she proceeded, certain improvements occurred to her and she marked them with a pencil; when she had finished her perusal of "Modern Chivalry" she was surprised to find that it was eight o'clock.

She began to feel uneasy; it was early spring and the evenings were long and dark, and as this particular evening was misty, she began to wonder whether it had been foggy in the City and whether John had met with any accident while crossing a crowded thoroughfare.

Half past eight and still no John. It was getting serious. The dinner was really spoilt and Elaine could bear it no longer. John's sister lived across the road and her husband often came home with John; she therefore resolved to look them up and see if Mr. Parkes had seen anything of her husband.

She reached the door at the same time as a telegraph messenger. The door was opened by Parkes himself, who greeted her rather absently and told her "Emily is inside," while he tore open the envelope. Mrs. Martin, however, remained in the hall waiting till he had read the message.

"Is it about John?" she asked when he had dismissed the telegraph boy.

"Er—yes," stammered Parkes rather confusedly. "I must go back to Charing Cross, Elaine; got to do a little deal with John—very urgent. Ought to have thought of that! Must tell Emily I'm off. You'll excuse me, won't you?"

He ran into the dining-room and reappeared in the hall before Elaine had time to think. Hastily putting on his hat and coat, he was about to pass her when she stopped him and asked:

"John is all right, isn't he, Henry?"

"Bless you, I believe so! Excuse me, just got time to catch the train."

He was off; and after saying a few words to her sister-in-law Elaine returned home.

She felt rather angry with John for having forgotten to tell her that he would be late and she was cross with Henry for he had evidently forgotten an appointment with her husband. Yet that wasn't like Henry; he was so methodical.

It was about half-past ten when she heard someone open the street door with a key. It could only be John.

She went into the hall with mixed feelings to meet him.

There was a good light in the hall; that was one of the things that John insisted upon—he said that he wanted the place to appear as though its inmates were alive. Thanks to the bright light she was able to discern her husband's condition.

One sleeve of his overcoat was entirely gone and the other seemed to be tearing itself away from him, for it hung half detached from the body of the garment. There were sundry holes in his clothes, varying in size from a mince pie to half-a-crown; his face was spotted with blood that came from a bruised eyebrow; a necktie with the knot at the back of the neck, and the fragments of a collar completed a most disreputable

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appearance. He had no hat, and Mrs. Martin, amidst all her bewilderment, vaguely wondered what had become of the glossy guinea tile.

"Good gracious, John, whatever is the matter?" asked Mrs. Martin, her arms dropping listlessly by her sides.

"Modern chivalry!" was John's reply as he slipped off what remained of his overcoat and stalked into the dining room closely followed by Elaine.

"But what—?" began Elaine. And then she stopped helplessly.

The first thing that caught John's eye was the essay on "Modern Chivalry." He seized it, took out the paper fastener with grim deliberation, laid the sheets along the floor one at a time, and then calmly walked all over them with the muddy boots which he had forgotten to wipe on the mat. After this, he gathered up the sheets with a running sweep of the hand, placed them on the burning coal and trod them down into the fire with his heel, savagely, without in the least heeding his wife's frantic appeal.

"Now sit down there," he commanded, pointing to a chair as he sat down in another.

His wife obeyed in astonishment.

"Look here," he continued, mopping his bleeding eyebrow and unconsciously wiping his face with his handkerchief, thereby giving himself a most startling appearance, "You take it from me that that modern chivalry business is a fraud. Elaine, I'm going to call you Ellen from this minute; that other name is a great deal too romantic, and romanticism doesn't pay in these days, at least, the romantic person gets paid in a manner he doesn't like."

He paused for breath and Mrs. Martin endeavoured to get a word in.

"But, John dear, what is the matter?"

"Matter?" roared John. "Isn't the matter plain enough—can't you see me? You'll drop your membership of the Literary Society from now, Ellen. Have you renewed your subscription to Mudie's? Well, you'll write and tell 'em that the doctor says no more novels are to come into this house—if he dosen't say so, I'll make him!"

"But, John——"

"You belong to several societies, don't you? Give 'em all up! No more modern chivalry in this house; it's the biggest fraud of the century!"

Then John was obliged to pause and Mrs. Martin contrived to soothe him a little and induced him to tell her what had taken place.

"I was detained unexpectedly at the office, so missed my usual train," began John.

It was not easy to talk with a cigar in his mouth, especially as one of his front teeth had left him during the evening, but he made a fairly creditable performance.

"I stayed a few minutes at the office as I did not care to hang about the station, and then I set off.

"I generally take the quiet streets on purpose. As I was going along I saw a young woman in front of me; she turned down a street which had no thoroughfare, so I concluded that she was going to the Charing Cross District Station and had taken a wrong turning. If she were not going to that station, where was she going?

"Then I thought of the modern chivalry business and I went after her and told her that she had mistaken her way. She didn't seem to appreciate my attention, and turned abruptly in another direction; but I was full of the chivalry notion and decided to keep a few feet behind her to see that she came to no harm—just as that fellow did for you.

"She didn't go straight to the station. I knew that I should miss my train, but I supposed you wouldn't mind that when you heard that I was acting the part of a knight of old, so I continued to see that she came to no harm."

"Of course, John dear; you wouldn't be my husband if you didn't help a lady in distress."

"Just so," continued John. "We hadn't gone very far when two fellows rushed out of a dark corner; one tried to get her bag and the other tried to kiss her."

"And you went to her assistance?" said Elaine decisively.

"Certainly! I did the modern chivalry trick. But it didn't act this time as it ought to have done. The two men set upon me, and the lady in distress clutched me by the collar and pulled one way while they pulled the other, all three of them shouting for the police. I pitched into the two men, and we fell on the ground, leaving my collar in the hands of the fair lady. We prodded at each other and got generally mixed up in the mud of the gutter. Then up came two bobbies.

"The men in blue didn't stop to make inquiries, but joined in the prodding, only they had the best of it because they were standing up and we three were on the ground. Finally another policeman came up, and then they pulled us up from the ground and dragged us off to the police station. The lady followed in tears."

John had to have a little wine at this juncture.

"When we got to the station and the sergeant asked the charge, we all spoke at once and it would have puzzled a phonograph to have recorded that charge. After a while the sergeant managed to quiet us and ask the foremost bobby what was wrong. But, bless you, he couldn't tell; he had been attracted to the spot by a brawl and that was all he could say. Then he turned to the lady, and, to my surprise, she said:

"'That wretch'—yes, my dear, she meant *me*!—'followed me and made an unprovoked attack on these two gentlemen, my father and my husband. He ought to have five years' penal servitude.'

"Well, Ellen, the long and the short of it is that I was put in a cell and had to wire to Harry to come and bail me out. In the morning I am to appear at Bow Street and I shall be lucky if I get off with a fine. Now, if you don't promise me that you'll drop all these new-fangled ideas about chivalry I'll go to South Africa to-morrow and get killed. It won't work now-a-days, I tell you. Will you promise?"

And she promised.

G. Day.

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MR. WAGSTAFF'S POULTRY TEASER.

MR. JETHRO WAGSTAFF recently made up his mind that this year he would have a successful garden. That is, he meant that his seeds should come up naturally, and not through the medium of his neighbour's hens, as they did last year.

To sit on the step all day and watch the garden, stone in hand, to discourage any itinerant Brahma from commencing operations, would be altogether too monotonous and tiring for a man so fond of variety as Mr. Jethro Wagstaff. He was afraid his neighbours might be provoked if he shot their fowls, and desisted from setting his dog on them because he knew the dog would damage the beds quite as much, if not more, than the chickens themselves.

He knew that it would do no good to have the hens' wings cut, for nothing short of cutting a hen through the neck causes flowers to thrive and grow properly. So Mr. Wagstaff allowed himself to become engrossed with the idea of inventing some simple contrivance for the hen who is always ready to scrape an acquaintance with your flower beds.

After a time he hit on a plan of filling a piece of board with holes, like a cribbage-board, and setting in each hole a lucifer match with the head up. This he intended to place in the garden, and sprinkle earth over it, and let the hen go to work.

A day or two after he had one of these articles perfected, and placed it in the garden, concealed by soft soil that would invite the most indifferent hen to come in and scratch.

Then he left the gate open and went into the house, where he could see what took place through the blinds without being observed by the besieging bipeds.

In a few moments a large Cochin China hen wandered in, and was attracted by the fresh earth. After a prelude of jubilant cackle at getting in unobserved, and at the prospect of having a flower-bed all to herself, the old Cochin China jumped on to the soft spot, landing on both feet. It was a blissful moment for Mr. Wagstaff. It was likewise a blissful moment for the hen, for, as she drove both feet deep into the earth, she struck a match that immediately ignited the others, and, before the hen could realise the situation, or even guess at it, she was treated to a firework display.

"Oh, this is lovely!" observed Mr. Wagstaff, as the family all pounded him on the back to relieve him of the hysterics which had so suddenly prostrated him. "Oh, wasn't it funny," said Mr. Wagstaff, "to see the expression of surprise that came over the hen, and sort of shook her confidence in herself and everything else."

They all agreed it was; and Mr. Wagstaff was just in the act of drinking some water when his boy called out:

"Here comes that big Dorking of Maginley's!"

Mr. Wagstaff was at the window in a moment, and, sure enough, there was Maginley's big fowl. The light and airy gait showed that he was feeling at peace with all the world, and that he was just in the humour for having a little fun.

It was all that the little Wagstaff could do to replace the burned matches with good ones and sprinkle a little earth over them in time.

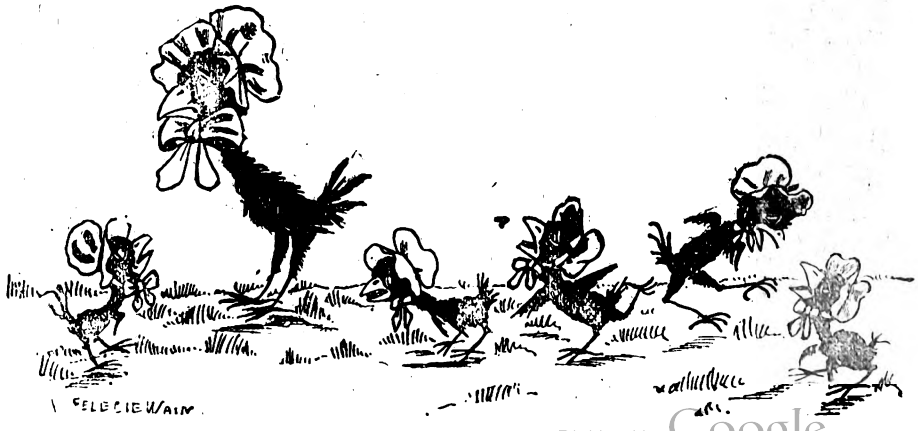
Then the big bird stepped up as proudly as though he were called before the curtain. He was majestic and grand in his strut and general demeanour, while his feathers shone like a military uniform.

Mr. and Mrs. Wagstaff sat at the window, and the little Wagstaffs clambered on chairs to get a glimpse of Maginley's rooster.

That eminent bird lost no time in getting on the particular spot intended for his reception. He fairly danced on the matches, and filled the air with dust. The matches went off, and before the Maginley bird knew what was the matter, his feathers took fire, and as he flew across the garden in the dust, with a tail of fire about fifty feet behind him, an amateur astronomer thought he had discovered a comet, and sent a full account to the local paper.

Wagstaff's Hen-Teaser has just been patented, and it is safe to say that Wagstaff will not be troubled by his neighbour's poultry any more for some time to come.

F. FLOOD.



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THE PAPER FOR THE TEA TABLE.

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THE BRAIN GYMNASIUM

In these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, Short Stories, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by first post on Monday, May 14th, 1900.

No. 106.

Show how a life "double as long" is "also begun old."

No. 107.

Make a symmetrical sentence about "Pears' Soap," using each letter twice.

No. 108.

What place in Africa is formed by the contraction of "a boy's name," "the young of a tiger," read backwards, and three-quarters of "an instrument"?

No. 109.

LI—NO—HE—ST—AR—SS—EC—RS—OL—AT—MO—ON—NC.

Re-arrange the above groups of letters so that a familiar adage can be read.

No. 110.

O	F	R	I		R	O	H	I
E	C	O	N	B	Y	N	C	L
C	S	E	T	H	D	K	A	D
E	I	H	T		L	O	H	E

Commencing at a corner letter, and proceeding one letter at a time, but not diagonally, read the name of a well-known poem, the name of its author, and the name of a character in one of his other works.

No. 111.

A biting wind and blinding rain,
A night of mire and slush,
As ready for the omnibus
I make a frantic rush.

My LAST, my LAST—conductor LAST!
I cry with all my might.
My FIRST and more the man replies,
Then vanishes from sight.

Though strange it seems while reading this,
My WHOLE'S before your eyes,
And, even as I now conclude,
My WHOLE I utilise.

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Nos. 82 to 87.

The prize of £2 has been awarded this week to Mrs. Frances A. Gardner, of 1 Langdon Place, Swansea, whose solution was the first correct one dealt with.

Each of the following has been awarded a copy of "The Lost Provinces," by Louis Tracy:

John G. Usher, Baltinglass, co. Wicklow.
T. Williamson, Cheapside, Peterhead.
S. G. Harrison, 51 Madeley Road, Ealing, W.
E. Forsdike, 161A Kilburn Lane, Queen's Park, N.W.
Mrs. E. Davis, 88 Pilton Street, Barnstaple.
W. Sammes, Wycliffe House, Swindon, Wilts.
Miss A. Scott, Ryde Cottage, St. Mildred's Road, Ramsgate.
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DROP
RANE
ONCE
PEEL

No. 89. PAN-AMA CAN-AL.

No. 90.
CALM
AREA
LESS
MASTIFF
IDEA
FELL
FALL

No. 91. DUNCE.

No. 92. The cryptogram was formed by numbering "z" as 1, "a" as 2, "y" as 3, "b" as 4, and so on.
FROLIC.

No. 93. WARLOCK.

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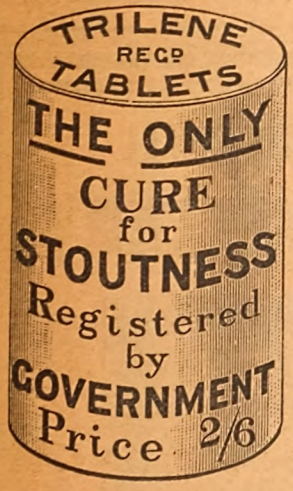

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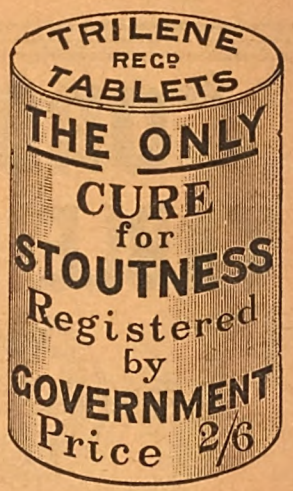

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

'Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

Mrs. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st. and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 2lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me. "Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Riseholme Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if the had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

FATHER T. M. BYRNE, of Holy Cross Abbey, Sligo, writes: "When I began your Tablets I was 12st. 5lb.; I now scale at 10st. 11lb.—my case, too, is hereditary."

Mrs. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44, Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to ake more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. WHITEHOUSE, of Poplar Avenue, Edgbaston, writes: "My husband is in splendid health, and has lost 15lb. in weight since taking the Tablets; I am sure I thank you on his account."

Mrs. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

MR. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs, says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mr. BUTLER, Surgeon, M.R.C.V.S., of Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient has lost 1st. in weight whilst taking your Tablets."

Mrs E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver nr Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

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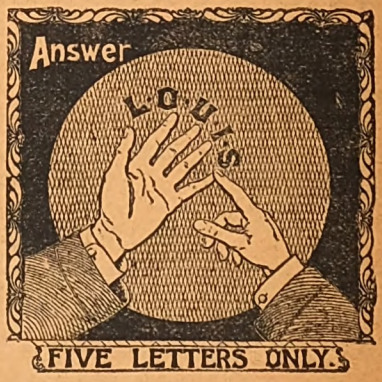

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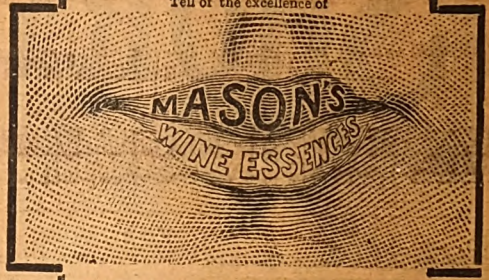

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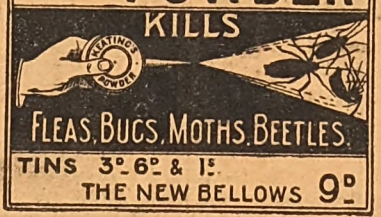

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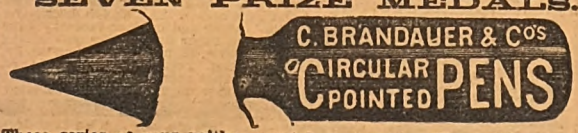

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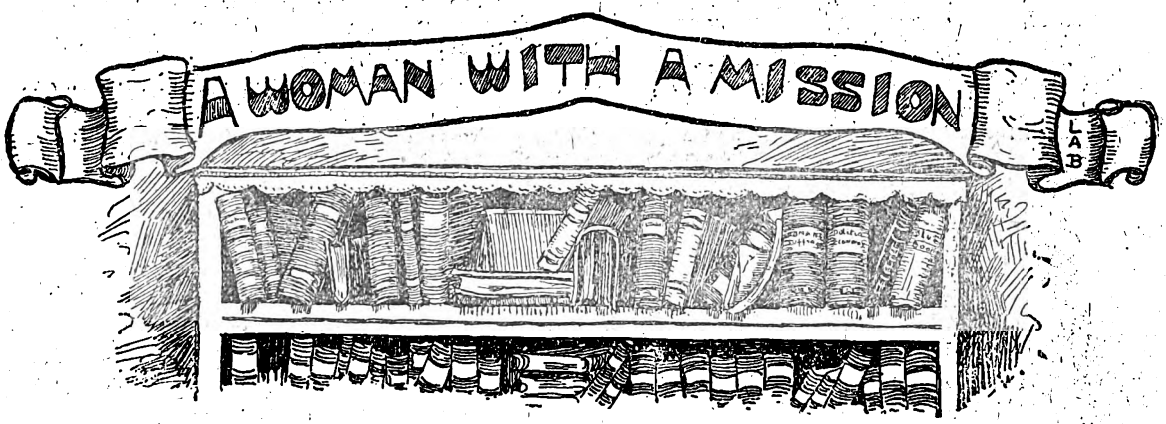
A WOMAN WITH A MISSION



"My dear Cecil, the boy's simply infatuated. Won't listen to a word, but flies into a temper if I so much as hint that Lois Richards does not exactly come up to my ideal of a daughter-in-law. Imagine, Cecil, she's thirty-three if she's a day, rather plain, and, above all things—strong-minded! It's so odd what Eugene can see in her, I always understood men liked soft womanly women, but nowadays everything seems turned upside down."

"But, my dear Helen, things might be worse," returned her companion, a distinguished-looking man of about forty-five. "Miss Richards might be a ballet dancer with an affection for porter, and a dislike to 'aitches.' I don't gather that she is either uneducated or without refinement."

"I'd far rather she was a ballet girl," retorted Lady Hilliers, "her vulgarities might in that case be softened into eccentricities; but what, I ask you, Cecil, can one hope for in a woman with a mission?"

"Aborigines?"—questioned Lord Merton.

"A great deal worse. Aborigines always have a certain vogue—the same as Charity Bazaars. No, my dear Cecil, Miss Richards goes in for Women's Rights, and the emancipation of her sex generally."

"How does she propose to set about it?" asked Lord Merton, slightly curious.

"I haven't troubled about that," said Lady Hilliers hopelessly, "it's quite enough for me, that she wishes to. She has a flat just above Eugene's studio, and, when not engaged in missionising she calls in—so Eugene says—to paint. Anything more unconventional, improper even, I cannot imagine."

"Have you been to see her, Helen?"

"I? Good gracious, Cecil! Of what are you thinking? How could I call on a woman who, who—well, to say the least of it—is most peculiar?"

Lord Merton looked sharply at the fashionable beauty sitting opposite. There was a gleam of humour in his eyes, and his lips twitched under the thick moustache, but when she raised her face, and shot at him a most reproachful glance his heart smote him, and the humour gave way to a kindly smile that was infinitely reassuring.

"If there's anything I can do, Helen?" he began.

Lady Hillier's face cleared.

"You can do everything," she said. "You know, Cecil," she went on, "how much my boy is to me, and the idea of his marrying this—woman, is like a nightmare. But Eugene is so high spirited he will not brook a word, from me, and indeed I could not run the risk of even a temporary estrangement from him. And so, Cecil, all my hopes are fixed on you."

"I'm afraid, I haven't much influence with Eugene, Helen."

"I don't mean with regard to Eugene, but the woman."

"I don't quite understand you. Am I to offer Miss Richards a handsome balance at her bankers if she will relinquish Eugene, or to build a Mission Hall where she can hold forth—or—in short, my dear, what am I to offer?"

"Yourself."

"That," said Lord Merton with a laugh, "is the one thing I cannot give you. Seriously, Helen, what do you mean? Even to oblige you I really cannot marry a woman with a mission."

"No," said her ladyship sweetly, "but you can make her think you want to. Indeed, Cecil," she added, laying her hand upon his arm, "I am not asking you to do anything dishonourable, this Lois Richards can have no true womanly feeling about her—she doesn't really care for Eugene, otherwise she would not stand in his light. Title and position are all she thinks of, and if my boy sees that, he will be cured of this mad infatuation immediately. All I ask you is to make believe—not a difficult matter for you, Cecil, where a woman is concerned."

"It's not exactly what you women call nice," he said.

"But you will do it, Cecil, because I ask you."

And because she asked him, she, the woman who had held his heart in the days when he was but a penniless subaltern with nothing but his handsome face and silvery tongue to recommend him—because she asked him, he consented.

Lady Helen smiled as the door shut behind Lord Merton, and her face flushed at the remembrance of his words. She was positive he loved her and yet she was somewhat puzzled as to why he had not yet made a formal declaration. Years ago it had been so different. It was not to be supposed that she could marry a man with neither position or prospects. Who was to know that he would drop into the title? But then again who was to know that the impetuous, passionate lover of the long ago, would have developed into the always charming, but slightly cynical man of the world? She sighed impatiently. She had been a widow now for fifteen years, and all the time, Cecil had been her loyal and faithful friend—but her lover never for a moment.

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It didn't look exactly like the sort of place a woman with a mission would select for a habitation. Certainly not in Lord Merton's eyes. He had vaguely expected a chilly not to say forbidding apartment, furnished on the principle of the greatest convenience in the least possible space. He had looked to find piles of flannel garments mixed up with blue books and statistics, he was prepared for a hideous wall paper and a glaring carpet.

But this, he reflected, was distinctly not the room of a strong-minded woman, at least—he corrected himself hastily, an unpleasantly strong-minded woman.

The walls were hung with pale yellow draperies, and curtains of the same hue shaded the windows. The whole room was a study in yellow, even to the tall, slim, vases of venetian glass filled with mimosa and stately daffodils.

"She must be daring to risk so much yellow," thought Lord Merton, "if she's as plain as Helen says."

And then, the door opened and Lois Richards, "thirty three if she's a day, plain and painfully strong-minded," entered.

'Twas not without good reason Lady Helen had so described poor Lois.

The fashionable Society woman understood that the majority of people accept a third person's estimate of anything—be it a book, a play a beauty or a reputation, rather than think for themselves. But for once she might have spared her pains, for, by one of those unaccountable freaks to which all men are subject, no sooner had Lois Richards smiled and given him her hand, than Lord Merton forgot all he had been told about her and came to the conclusion she was charming.

Somehow the ostensible reason for his call—business in connection with some "Society" to which Lois belonged seemed to have grown curiously inadequate. He found himself stumbling over facts and figures in a way quite unlike his usual *sang froid*, and more than once caught a gleam of amusement in his hostess's eyes, when he made some peculiarly foolish error.

He felt himself on the brink of being discovered. A few pertinent questions had already shown Lois his ignorance of the "cause" which he professed to champion, and with the knowledge had come the remembrance that Lord Merton was a special friend of Lady Hillier, and as such must be inimical to her. Her face clouded, and turning to his lordship she was about to catechise him as to his *bona fides*, when the situation was saved by the arrival of Sir Eugene.

"Lois," he cried, rushing in impetuously. "I want your opinion at once. I can't get on with that picture till you've seen it. Come down to the studio, there's a good girl."

"Why, Merton," he exclaimed, suddenly perceiving his lordship, and then broke off, fixing his eyes upon the unfortunate nobleman's face in a stare the reverse of polite.

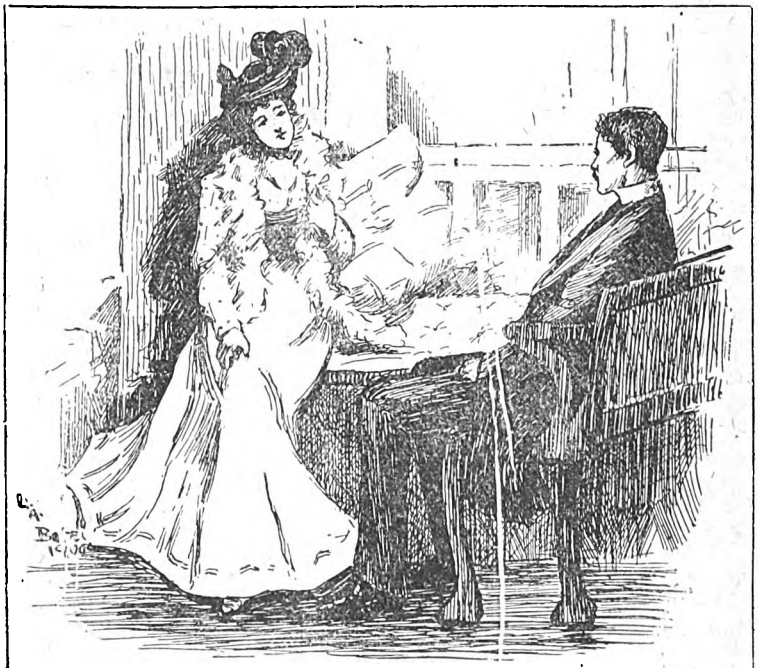
"Lord Merton came to see me in reference to a society I'm connected with," said Lois gravely. "Supposing we all come and look at the picture, Eugene?"

The next half hour was one of the most uncomfortable that Lord Merton had ever experienced. More than once he wished devoutly that he had disregarded Lady Helen's plea, though at the same time he was conscious of feeling very pleased that he had seen Lois Richards. Truly, hers was a face that repaid one for study; a fair, creamy skin through which the warm blood flushed whenever she was stirred by a tale of suffering or sorrow. Large, somewhat mournful looking eyes, shaded by lashes black as night. What on earth did Helen mean by calling her plain?

Helen would have pointed out that Lois could not lay claim to a small mouth, or a classical nose, also that if her hands were white and beautifully formed they might possibly be considered large! And how could a woman with a large mouth, big hands, and a bad nose be otherwise than plain.

What a sweet smile she had, he thought, and what a lucky dog was Eugene, to see and speak to her whenever he so felt inclined. For the first time Cecil Merton did not feel altogether cordial towards his young friend. The conviction that if Eugene were handsome he was insufferably conceited stole upon him, and when with a defiant look in his direction, the young fellow called Miss Richards "dear," his lordship felt that it was time to go. He left accordingly in a frame of mind the reverse of friendly towards Eugene, and with his heart strangely stirred by thoughts of Lois.

"How long is this to go on, Lois?" exclaimed the artist when at last they were alone. "For how long, I say, am I to be denied the



Lord Merton looked sharply at the fashionable beauty sitting opposite.

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right of shielding you from insult, protecting you from all annoyances? It isn't fair to me, dear. Why am I not to put it out of the power of meddlesome fools to annoy you? Do you suppose I don't know why Lord Merton came here, Lois? He was sent to see you by my mother, that he might add his impertinent remarks to the list of imperfections which she has compiled concerning you."

"I don't think that," said Lois.

Somehow the thought that Lord Merton had called with the express intention of putting her "under the microscope" was not exactly pleasing. He had such a clever—such an attractive face, surely he could not be so utterly mean as Eugene said.

The young fellow glanced at her moodily.

"Lord Merton, after all, is beside the question," he said, "he is only one of a host of curious, ill-bred people who seem to delight in annoying their superiors. What I want to know is, when I am to have the right of answering them?"

As he stood leaning against his easel, his fair boyish face flushed with anxiety, the charming if somewhat querulous mouth tightly set, Lois felt a pang of remorse that she could not respond to his appeal. She comprehended in a flash the disposition of the man who so earnestly implored her love. Gracious, winning, possessed of exuberant spirits, he was an ideal companion for a sunny day. But life, alas! was not one long spring morning, and the pliant nature of Eugene would not, she knew, flourish in the storm and stress of untoward circumstances.

Lord Merton strong, capable, self-controlled, self-contained—what a contrast to Eugene! She flushed, and wondered why she should have thought of him.

"Eugene," she said at last, "you speak as though there had been a promise on my part. If you remember, dear, I distinctly made it a condition of our friendship that you should not refer to the conversation which we had six months ago—when you asked me to be your wife."

"I remember only too well," he answered bitterly, "but a man must needs be made of stone, to see you, to drink in your beauty day by day, and not desire to hold you as his own against the world. I love you, Lois, utterly, intensely, and I can't help always doing so. Won't you have pity on me, darling, and give me just a little hope?"

He had taken her hands in his, and stood, gazing into her eyes, unutterable tenderness in his. What wonder that poor Lois, tired with her struggle for independence, dispirited with the sneers which greeted her, what wonder that she wavered for a moment? After all, it was but little good she did, her income was too small to admit of much; surely it would be better to leave it all behind, this life of hard endeavour with but small result.

"Lois," his arm stole gently round her waist. "Lois."

The door opened and Lois Richards entered.

"No, no," she cried, "a thousand times, it would mean life long misery for both; I cannot marry you, Eugene, because I do not love you."

Poor Eugene felt utterly crushed, but such was the intensity of his love that he would not accept the refusal.

And though it wrung her heart to see the utter desolation and despair with which he heard her answer, though for the next half-hour she suffered agonies, the while he raved, implored, prayed for her love with shaking hands, and tear-dimmed eyes, yet when it was over and she was left alone—how much alone she realised for the first time, she was thankful that she had not yielded, had not purchased lasting sorrow, and regret, for the sake of present sympathy and consolation.

As to Eugene, when he found that his appeals and ravings were all in vain and that Lois could not be moved, he went out feeling that life had lost all its poetry.

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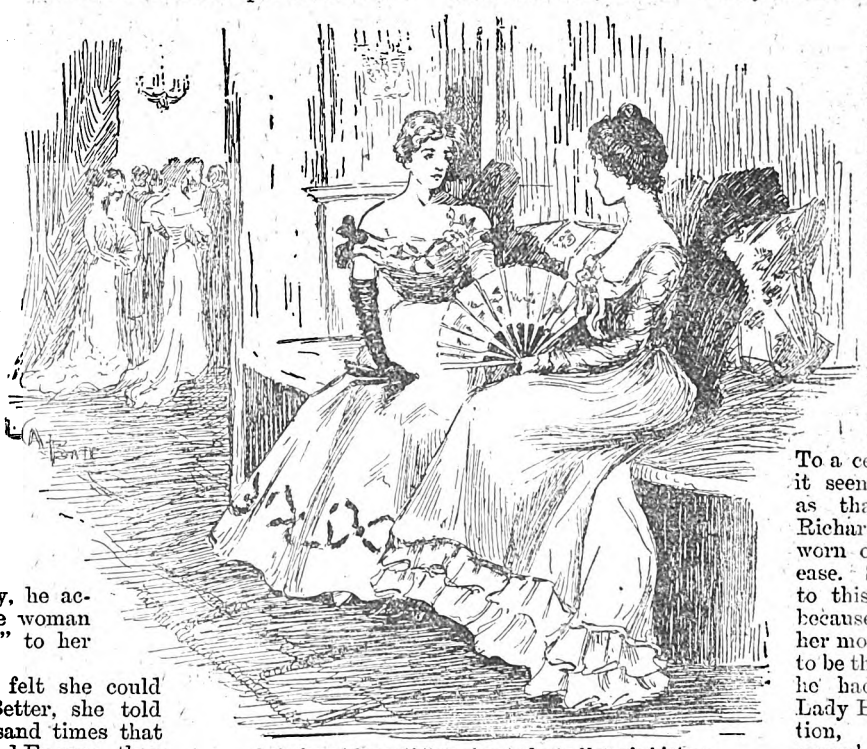
It was the fag end of the London season, and only those unfortunate persons who could not by any stretch of the imagination lay claim to that mysterious title "smart," were content to remain in town. Lady Hilliers had been due at a country house some ten days ago, and why she should linger was a mystery.

Things had not turned out quite as she had wished over *l'affaire Richards*, as she contemptuously styled it. True, Eugene had ceased to speak of, or to call upon the obnoxious person in question, but then it was almost as annoying that at the height of a most successful season he should have announced his intention of shooting big game, and started forthwith for Africa.

There was another and still more potent reason—albeit unacknowledged—for her ladyship's dissatisfaction. Lord Merton had not been so frequently of late, moreover when she laughingly asked how "his flirtation with the fair Lois was progressing," she had met with a rebuff none the less decided because perfectly courteous. Rumours had reached her that Cecil was a constant visitor at the flat, and that not infrequently, he accompanied "the woman with a mission," to her meetings.



Lois found herself listening to Lady Helen's history of Lord Merton.

Lady Helen felt she could not bear it. Better, she told herself, a thousand times that Lois had married Eugene, than that she should win from her the man she loved! And so it came to pass that she waited, day after day, hoping and yet fearing he would call.

She was out of sorts, she decided; London was unbearable in August, she had been mad to stay. The prospect of an evening alone with her thoughts, was more than she could face, and for a moment she contemplated starting for the country then and there. Turning over the contents of her writing table she came across an "At Home" card for that very evening. She remembered with a curious little pang, that she had shown it to Cecil, and they had laughed together at the elaborate design with which it was ornamented. As a rule Lady Helen would not have ventured within a mile of Mrs. Ponsonby-Vane's drawing room, but as it was she hailed the prospect of that worthy lady's entertainment with positive satisfaction.

Mrs. Ponsonby-Vane herself was rendered almost speechless with delight at the sight of her ladyship, whose title and position she retailed—it seemed to Lady Helen at least twenty times.

But amusing at first, after a while the good lady became burdensome, and Lady Helen was thinking of effecting an escape, when with an air of infinite contentment on his handsome features she encountered Cecil Merton.

"Why, Helen, what brought you here?"

"Since when," she answered, smiling, "has Mrs. Ponsonby-Vane taken my place in your esteem. It's a month, Cecil, since you came, and here I find you amidst a host of Goths and Vandals."

"I thought you had left town long ago," he said, "or you know I should have been round to see you. You don't look well, Helen. What's been the matter?"

She was undoubtedly a lovely woman, and her face touched into softness by her love looked infinitely attractive. Surely they might have been taken for lovers, as he bent over her with that air of complete forgetfulness of aught beside, so flattering to a woman. To a certain onlooker it seemed as certain, as that she, Lois Richards, felt tired, worn out, and ill at ease. She had come to this "At Home" because Cecil asked her most particularly to be there. Perhaps he had done so at Lady Helen's instigation, thinking to wound, to humiliate her. Then softer thoughts prevailed, and it was her own sweet self that answered, then not a little to that lady's chagrin, Cecil fetched her to Lady Helen's side.

A few words of conventional greeting, and then without knowing how it was managed, Lois found herself listening to, and believing Lady Helen's history of Lord Merton. Cecil had left the two women together, and, gathering all her forces for the fray, his quondam love opened the attack.

"Lord Merton's very charming, don't you think, Miss—er—Richards? I dare say you've wondered why he never married. It does seem a pity, doesn't it? But you see I was so very young and he was so heavily in debt, poor fellow, that it would have meant ruin to have accepted him. I'm forgetting," she added sweetly, "of course you don't know. To make a long story short, dear Miss Richards, fate parted us when we were very young—that was the first volume of our romance. Then,

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my duty towards my boy, my dear Eugene, stepped in the way of happiness and that," with a sigh, "was the second. But the third is always the best, isn't it? and I think that very soon the novel will be completed, in the orthodox fashion. I'm really so delighted to have met you," she went on, "my son often talked to me about you."

In a choked voice Lois asked after Eugene. He, she thought bitterly, had acted very differently to Cecil.

"Very well, thank you," cooed her tormentor. "It was so sensible of you, dear Miss Richards, to understand how impossible a marriage would have been between you. At one time, when of course"— laying her hand caressingly upon Lois's shoulder—"I did not know you, I contemplated asking Lord Cecil to intervene. It was very wicked of me, but I even suggested he should make love to you in rivalry with Eugene.

"Are you going? Well I'm very pleased to have met you, we must see more of each other, when—when the third volume is complete."

"Miss Richards, Cecil? Oh, she felt tired and went home. I don't wonder I'm sure, Mrs. Ponsonby-Vane is enough to tire a cast iron constitution. Let's get away before she sees us."

Never had Lord Cecil been more tender, more charming in his manner, and Lady Helen's hopes were high when he said "farewell,"

"I have something to tell you, Helen," he said. "Something which closely affects my happiness. We have been good friends, you and I, that I must tell you before anyone. I'll come to-morrow afternoon."

But for all that they were "such good friends" poor Lady Helen never came within a mile of guessing what he had to say.

* * * * *

It was very pleasant in Lois' little sitting room, however hot and dry without, it never seemed to be otherwise than cool and refreshing. Perhaps it was associated in an indefinite sort of way with Lois herself, for those who knew her well were wont to say she had an infinitely "restful" influence on those about her.

Lord Merton felt strangely thrilled, as the slim, white-gowned figure, came to meet him, and his pulses beat quickly as he took her hand.

"Tired?" he said in that caressing voice of his. "Was Mrs. Ponsonby-Vane too much for you, Lois, or have you been working too hard?"

"I wish," she said with a touch of temper quite unlike her usual serenity, "that you would not use my name in so unceremonious a fashion. I don't like it, Lord Merton."

It was seldom that his lordship showed surprise, but on this occasion he felt too astonished to conceal it.

"What have I done?" he stammered; "what has changed you so?"

"I am not changed," she answered, "I have not purported to be a friend to anyone, and all the time laughed in my sleeve at their simplicity. Surely," she added passionately, "you might have had the grace to drop your mask when you discovered that I did not mean to marry Eugene. After you learnt that there was not, or never could be any bond between us, what shadow of excuse remained to justify your conduct? Had you discovered I was mercenary, and desired money, and title, then, I say, then, your part would have been despicable. But when you found that I was not what others painted me, still you continued, and professing friendship held me up to ridicule for the amusement of the woman who had bade you 'make believe.'"

"Who told you this?"

"What does it matter, since I know?"

"You don't know all, I swear you only know the half, and that the baser half. Lois, yes, I will call you Lois, my Lois, you shall hear me. Years back I loved her, Helen Vincent, with all the mad enthusiasm of a romantic boy, but she was too sensible to let passion play havoc with her life, and so she married Hilliers, the banker. Since she lost her husband we have been friends—no more, save that my friendship was coloured somewhat by the past. She told me of her son's infatuation, begged me to help her, and in an idle moment, not knowing who, or what you were, I yielded. I came prepared to flirt—if you will—to 'make believe' I loved you, but from the first, I saw, on my part it would be reality. I confess it was a mean, ignoble thing to do, but Nemesis has swiftly overtaken me. Lois, have I sinned past all forgiveness?"

"And you're not going to marry Lady Helen?"

"I am going to marry you," he answered gravely.

"Oh, Cecil," she said, her voice breaking, "think well before you ask, for I don't think I have courage to refuse you."

* * * * *

Lady Hilliers says "poor Cecil" is ruined by his marriage, and occasionally hints that had she chosen things would have turned out very differently.

But Lord Merton is quite satisfied, for Lois is even more devoted to her husband than her "mission," indeed she doesn't trouble quite so much about the latter nowadays.

A. E. JONES.

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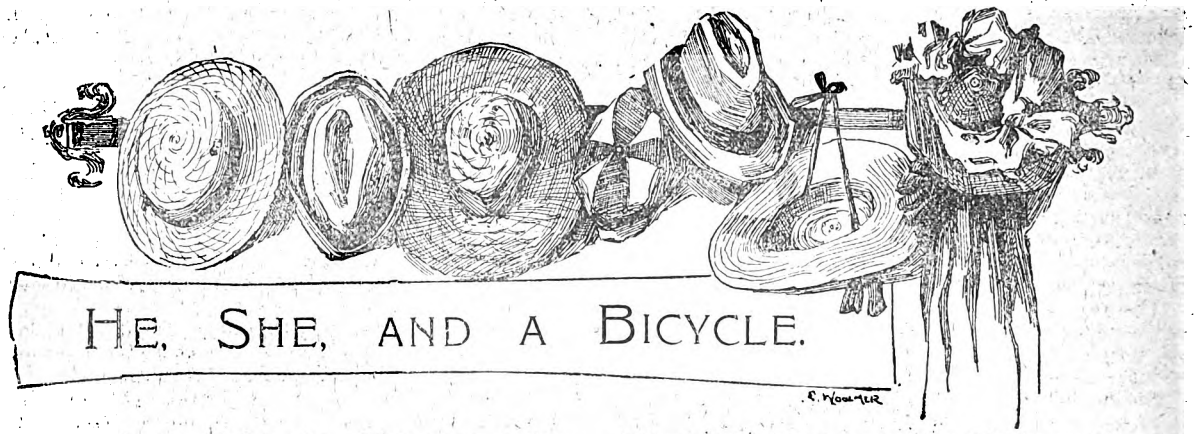

He, She, and a Bicycle.

They had quarrelled again. They were always quarrelling, but this last affair was a battle royal.

She declared that he was arrogant, arbitrary, abusive, and abominable. And she looked so adorably impertinent when she said these appalling things that he felt like shaking her soundly and kissing her full on her red, rebellious mouth.

But he didn't. He only took up his hat, and with his laziest air and most mocking smile said he had the extreme honour of wishing her good afternoon.

Then he took himself to his club and ordered brandy and soda and sat over it an hour, looking haughty and cold and bored while inwardly he was raging furiously.

She waited until the door shut behind him, and then announced to the furniture that she would teach him a lesson that he wouldn't forget in a hurry. Then she stamped a small foot, and shook a small fist at his picture on the mantelpiece.

Next she went upstairs and made a most careful toilet, with deliberate intent to go forth and walk where she would be sure to meet the someone over whom they had quarrelled.

Then she threw herself, frills, laces, feathers, and all, on her bed, and cried until her dear little eyes were very red indeed.

And these imbeciles were neither married, affianced, nor yet "lovers." They were simply very good friends. They did not believe in love—that nonsense!

As if anyone of taste and judgment and worldly knowledge does in these days.

"Why, love has gone out of date," she was wont to say, with that charming, cynical air she was pleased to affect at times. "You and I are chums, *bons camarades*, good fellows together. Love? Rubbish!"

He, being a cunning dog, apparently consented to this theory.

He knew that the New Woman blight had struck her, and that he must give her time to get over it. After she had fully recovered he hoped for great events, which were to include a wedding, a home, and a happy domestic life.

She delighted in her *rôle* of "Bachelor Girl." She wore stand-up collars and cutaway coats, and thrust her hands in the pockets of her tweed walking gowns with a gentlemanly air which, being so absolutely at variance with her personality, was simply ludicrous. For if ever there was a soft, dainty, lovable bit of femininity it was this girl who turned up her saucy nose at love, and demanded scope for herself, scope, too, with an unusually large S.

"Marriage? What is marriage?" she would say. "Marriage is a mistake. A woman who is married is a slave to the whims, caprices, and insolence of her master. Women have borne this burden of matrimony long enough. Let them now develop themselves; let them grow and expand and show to the world the heights to which they may attain."

And so she rode a bicycle, and was secretary of a Ladies' Debating Society and believed herself a progressive woman indeed.

All this was very hard for him to bear. There were times when he gnashed his teeth in the impotence of despair, and longed to pick her up bodily—this small, caressable, defiant thing—and carry her away from debating societies, stand-up collars, knickerbockers, and kindred horrors, and teach her the sublimity of love.

But as the methods of the Middle Ages are not good form in these days, he was forced to content himself with an occasional outbreak of remonstrance, entreaty, and, to-day, command.

And herein was the cause of this fierce contest, the smoke of which yet lingered in the air. He had demanded that she should not bike in knickerbockers with a contemptible cad.

She had replied that she should bike when, where, and with whom she pleased, and that she really could not see what business it was of his, whereupon he had stalked off to brandy and soda, and she had taken to her bed.

Now, as I have said, he was a cunning dog.

He pondered over the situation, and at last evolved a scheme of revenge and ultimate conquest.

There was in her circle of acquaintances one young woman of whom she always spoke with a lofty and disdainful air. To this particular young woman he now addressed a note asking if he might have the honour of riding with her the next afternoon in the Park. When he received a gracious note in the affirmative a grin of unholy joy lighted up his stern, dark face.

Accordingly, the next afternoon, when she, in a tan Eton jacket, and the snuggest, smartest knickerbockers possible, was bowling along through the Park with the Contemptible Cad, she suddenly saw approaching on the tan the man she had flouted, tormented, and annoyed in every possible way, and whom she had come to look upon as her special property, devotedly bending over That Girl, faultlessly attired, and looking very dainty and feminine indeed.

Somehow her knickerbockers suddenly appeared vulgar, and she wished she had a skirt to hide them.

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She saw That Girl give them a covert glance of quiet scorn as she rode by.

Matters were immediately made worse by the remark of the Contemptible Cad:

"Bah Jove, how stunning she looked! Aw—after all you know, a pretty woman never looks so well as in an irreproachable habit, don't you think?"

And then she snapped out "No!" to the great surprise of the Contemptible Cad, and said she had a headache, and would go home at once. In vain her escort told her that a spin would be the best medicine for her head. She paid no attention to his maunderings. Home she would go—home she went.

The rest of the afternoon she spent in composing and arranging the chilling, scathing speech with which she proposed to annihilate her *bon camarade* that evening when he called.

But he did not come.

Then it was that she began to have a funny little sensation in the neighbourhood of her heart, and a funny little choking lump in her throat. She had been so sure of him. He had always been so devoted. He had never failed her before. What did it mean? Could That Girl——

And she saw him again on horseback, bending over the graceful, pretty girl at his side. Ah! a new, a tormenting, a cruel emotion seized this self-poised, independent, progressive young woman. For the first time in her life she knew what it was to be jealous.

"Could he have suffered so when he asked her not to bicycle with the Contemptible Cad?" This was not an agreeable question, but it kept thrusting its face in hers, despite her efforts to laugh it away.

She passed a very miserable evening alone. She tried to read an instructive article on "The Advancement of Woman," but its dreary platitudes bored her. A dark, strong, tender face would come between her and the pages of the magazine she held.

She glanced at the illustrations of bicycling women in certain comic papers, and shudderingly wondered if she looked like them.

At last she could endure it no longer, and, sitting down at her desk, wrote a curt little note with just a tinge of friendliness, enough, she thought, to bring him to her feet the next evening.

But she reckoned without her host.

Next day came a courteously-worded reply, stating that until she showed some disposition to cease certain customs which she knew perfectly well made him unhappy, he would beg her to excuse him from seeing her.

This was a blow.

He had so long submitted to her dictatorial little ways, so long had fetched and carried and waited, that his sudden revolt was actually stupefying.

When she recovered a trifle from her amazement, she tossed her head and said that settled it.

But it didn't.

As the days went by she missed him, missed his devotion, kindness, and loyalty; missed his companionship, the pleasant confidences, the talk, the laughter—yes, even the quarrels.

It became intolerable at last, and so one day she let the woman come to the surface, and sent him a sweet, cordial note asking him to come and be reconciled.

"Now," she said, as she arrayed herself in the gown he liked best, "I must not concede too much. Man is an overbearing animal. He takes all he can get. I must remember that I have a cause to maintain."

But when she went towards him with outstretched hands, blushing divinely, she looked so sweet, so radiant, so womanly, he suddenly snatched her to his heart and kissed her rapturously.

"This is not a strictly friendly proceeding," she began, endeavouring to escape from the arms which held her as if they would never grant release.

"Darling," he said, "never mind about the friendship—let that go. We are no longer comrades and good fellows. It is useless to try to cheat me by those terms. I love you—love you, do you hear? And you love me, or you would never have sent for me. But I shall go away for ever unless you accede to my terms."

"And what are they?" she murmured, hiding her face on his heart to escape the storm of kisses.

"Unconditional surrender. No debating societies, no knickerbockers, no progression. A wedding next month."

She hesitated a moment, as she saw her freedom and the cause for which she had been ready to lay down her life, slipping away from her. Then lifting her face she looked at him with her heart in her eyes.

"Do you know," she murmured, "I think I must have loved you all along, or I would not have fought so with you."

So they were reconciled, and lived happily ever afterwards.

W. Fewmore.

He: "You have stolen my heart."

She: "That's a nice thing to say after you have been begging me for six weeks to accept it."

A bald-headed man fainted the other day, and was very indignant when he was coming to at hearing a Cockney exclaim: "Give him hair! Give him hair!"

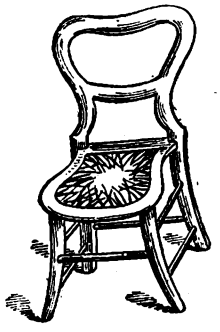
"Helen, say that you will be mine."

"I shall say nothing of the sort. If you care to be my husband, however, we can discuss the question."

"Why will you not announce our engagement, sweetheart?"

"Why, Edgar, it is so beautiful to be engaged secretly, as we are, without letting a single person know about it. Every one of my friends envies me."

WHY IS THIS CHAIR LIKE A BILL BEING PAID?



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FOR ANSWERING THIS RIDDLE AND OTHERS.

See this week's "Pearson's Weekly."

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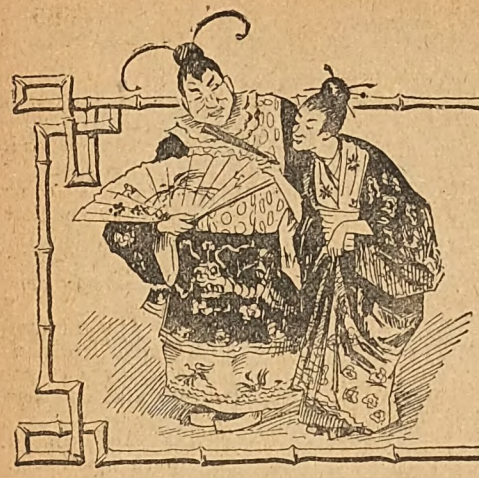

Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

V.—HE TURNS TO PHRENOLOGY AND FINDS VARIOUS BUMPS AND ADVENTURES.

NOTHING but a faint smile about the corners of his mouth and a gurgling at intervals in his throat indicated to Mrs. Bowser during the dinner-hour that Mr. Bowser had a little surprise in store for her. It was useless for her to guess what it was. And she therefore waited in patience till they had returned to the sitting-room. Then Mr. Bowser produced a little book and looked it over for ten minutes before he said:

"You have heard of phrenology, of course? If I am not mistaken, old Professor Fowler once examined your head."

"Is that book about phrenology?" she quietly asked.

"It is. I am going to post myself a bit. To-day I felt the heads of three different men in the office, and told the character of each and every one."

"I thought it was about time. I believe it's about a week since you dropped the last new thing."

"I expected you'd say something mean," replied Mr. Bowser, but without his usual heat and without violence to the family cat rubbing against his leg. "If I had brought home a pocket Bible or a book of hymns, it would have been just the same. Phrenology is a recognised science. It is an interesting study. Why not study it with me?"

"Because I don't believe in it. You might as well feel the corns and bunions on a person's foot as the bumps on his head."

"You'd say that, of course, but I can soon convince you to the contrary. I'll feel your bumps, and, with the aid of this little book, I'll read your character as straight as a string. Just sit where you are, and——"

"You'll do nothing of the kind," she interrupted. "It's all nonsense, and you'd better put in your time reading history."

"Then take the book and feel my head. All the bumps are named."

"And, if what I find doesn't happen to suit you, there'll be a row. Let us have a game of draughts and pass a pleasant evening."

"Now, then, don't be silly," coaxingly remarked Mr. Bowser. "Let's see what there is to this thing. I pledge you my word not to get annoyed, even if you find me a murderer. Take the book and give it a trial."

Mrs. Bowser allowed herself to be persuaded. Selecting a chart of a man's head, she passed her fingers over Mr. Bowser's skull and presently said:

"According to phrenology, your bump of impetuosity is abnormally developed. You are also very conceited. You have no fixed purpose, but jump from one thing to another. You are quick-tempered and very obstinate. If you had more strength of character, you might make a mark in the world, but as it is——"

"You are also very conceited."

"But as it is, madam, I am very much obliged to you," said Mr. Bowser, as he rose up and reached for the book. "I might have known, of course, that you would slander me."

"I gave it exactly as it is in the book."

"Well, let it go. If it was your intention to turn me from my purpose you have failed. I

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shall continue to study the art. Perhaps the cook won't object to becoming a subject."

Mrs. Bowser smiled as he started for the kitchen, but raised no objections. The cook was just finishing her dinner dishes as Mr. Bowser invaded her domains.

"You have heard of phrenology?" he queried as he pointed to the book in his hand.

"Has the mistress any complaint to make of the cooking?" she asked in reply.

"Not that I know of. I was asking you if you knew about phrenology. It relates to the bumps on your heard, you know."

"And what of the bumps on me head? Did the mistress ask about me bumps when she engaged me? If she objects to them, let her give me notice."

"My good girl, you don't understand. All of us have bumps on our heads. By feeling the bumps one can tell a person's disposition. For instance, one bump shows a sweet temper, another shows self-conceit, another shows obstinacy, and so on."

"But isn't me cookin' all right?" demanded the woman.

"I said it was."

"Then who's to care about the bumps on me head, or me disposition?"

"You don't understand yet," continued Mr. Bowser. "By feeling the bumps on your head I can tell you——"

"You'll never feel my bumps while I'm alive!" interrupted the cook, "and if you ain't out of this kitchen in two jiffs I'll walk off and leave you without a cook!"

Mr. Bowser retired. It was a question whether he retired in good order or not. He realised that Mrs. Bowser had stood at the head of the stairs and overheard all, and that he had made a mess of it. She had a smile on her face as he entered the sitting room, and that smile brought a determination to his heart to conquer or die.

"You—you probably advise me to give it up, don't you?" he asked.

"You might practice outside," she suggested.

"And so I will!" he retorted, as the red came to his face. "I have set out to post myself in phrenology, and by the beard of my grandfather, I'll do it or die!"

He walked out into the hall, clapped on his hat and opened the door, and stepped out. There was a man hanging over a gate near. He wasn't a tramp, but a working man who was sweet on a girl living next door, and was waiting for her to appear. Mr. Bowser called to him, and he came in off the street and asked what was wanted.

"Would you like to earn ten shillings in about fifteen minutes?" was asked.

"Rather," was the curt and expressive reply.

Mr. Bowser called to him.

"Have you ever heard of phrenology?"

"If I have, I've forgotten. Is the gas leaking or a water pipe busted?"

"Phrenology has to do with the bumps on your head. I feel your bumps and read your character by them. I believe in it, but my wife doesn't. I want you to come and sit down for a few minutes while I show her that I'm right."

The man was willing. He followed Mr. Bowser in and was referred to as a "subject." Mrs. Bowser kept her chair and became interested.

"Now, then," began Mr. Bowser, after two minutes spent in locating various bumps, "I find your bump of musical talent above the average. I should say that you can play on several different instruments, and also that you have a fairly good voice."

"Great snakes, sir," gasped the man, "but I never could even raise a tune on a mouth organ; and as for singing, everybody runs away when I try it!"

Mr. Bowser flushed up and swallowed at the lump in his throat, and dared not look at Mrs. Bowser. After a minute he continued:

"I think you are inclined to be very religious. Are you a Sunday-school teacher?"

"Great Scott, no! Religious? Why, I'm the man who ate up a chapter of Exodus for a bet!"

"But you reverence truth," persisted Mr. Bowser as his face began to pale.

"Mebbe I do, sir, but I am noted for 'my fairy tales' all the same."

"And are you not tender-hearted—that is, don't you love children?"

"Well, I'm expected to be arrested to-morrow for banging a kid about this afternoon. Your henology, or whatever you call it, don't seem to work. I should think your wife is right."

"It never works unless there are brains under the bumps," stiffly replied Mr. Bowser as he handed the man his half-sovereign and accompanied him to the door.

When he returned, he stood before Mrs. Bowser, and glared at her a moment, and then said:

"Woman, this thing has gone to the limit. The conspiracy is plain. In your malicious desire to—to——"

Then Mrs. Bowser began to laugh. He gestured, but it did not stop her. He towered over her, but she continued to laugh. He shouted something about his solicitor, and her solicitor and divorce, but she hung to her chair and laughed. There was but one way to save his dignity. Like a crowbar on legs he marched down the hall, and like a crowbar with stiff knees he mounted the stairs, and two hours later she went to find him asleep, and his bump of conceit all flattened out.

M. QUAD.

Next Week: "HE WOULD HAVE SPENT A PLEASANT EVENING BUT FOR A BUTCHER'S BILL."

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A PHILOSOPHICAL COURTSHIP.

MONSIEUR ATHANASE GUILLEMOT, old, ugly, gouty, affable as a porcupine, gracious as a bear, one day gave his young and charming wife the only pleasant surprise he had ever vouchsafed to her during the seven years of their marriage.

He died, after two hours' illness, from congestion of the brain. Madame Guillemot found herself a widow at twenty-eight, and she did not, even for a moment, think of imitating the example of the widows of Malabar by burying herself alive in her husband's tomb.

Truth obliges me even to state that she managed to console herself with extreme facility. The matter was understood by everybody, and offended nobody. The old bear's wretched disposition was well known, and the condolences addressed to his spouse very nearly resembled congratulations.

And for her part, in receiving them, and in putting on a becoming air of bereavement under her long crape veil, she breathed sighs that savoured much more of relief than grief, and in fact quite plainly meant "What a good riddance!"

When the formal period of mourning had strictly expired—not a day longer—black gave place to grey and mauve in Madame Guillemot's costumes, and these colours, six months' after—to the very hour—gave precedence to pink, a tint that suited the pretty blonde widow's complexion admirably.

And when that day arrived, she did not lose one hour in making her *debut* in Society to which she brought the *éclat* of the brilliant radiance of her now renewed youth; even as a flower, long confined in the stuffy atmosphere of a hot-house, when restored to the freedom of air and sunlight, bursts out in the full luxuriance of its revivified beauty.

To her physical charms, Madame Guillemot added intelligence, vivacity, and that which never spoils anything—a good income.

Possessed of these manifold attractions, naturally she did not lack admirers in plenty. Indeed, it was not long before those who aspired to the good fortune of being her deceased husband's successor, might be counted as legion.

Among them, not to speak of innumerable supernumeraries of no value, might be counted a court representative, a wealthy manufacturer, a famous lawyer, a distinguished engineer, a fashionable doctor, a county landlord, and the professor of philosophy at the City College, M. Xavier Rochemaure.

A professor of philosophy in love?——Certainly, yes, why not? Is philosophy incompatible with marriage?

Remember Socrates! True, he was not very happy in his domestic relations, but all philosophers do not stumble on cross-grained Zantippes! I will even go so far as to say that a philosopher is more likely to succeed, as a husband, than any other type of man, for if by chance things turn out badly, has he not a whole armoury of principles and logic wherewith to fortify and console himself?

Anyhow, Xavier Rochemaure was so head over heels in love with Madame Guillemot, that one day, to his pupils' amazement, he began his lecture on metaphysics with these remarkable words:

"Metaphysics, gentlemen, is the science which treats of first causes, of spiritual beings, of abstract things. It teaches us to understand the origin of ideas, to reason about the infinite, to examine the origin of our sensations.

"She has pale golden hair, the most beautiful in the world; she has incomparably sweet eyes; her smile lights up everything around her like a ray of purest light——"

Then only did the professor perceive that instead of defining metaphysics he was drawing the portrait of Madame Guillemot. He recaught the thread of his discourse as best he could. Unfortunately, one poor pupil too conscientious, as it turned out in the result, had noted down the master's words, and shortly after, when undergoing an examination for the degree of B.A., he declared to his examiner—and stoutly maintained—that:

"Metaphysics had fair hair, blue eyes, and a beaming smile," a statement that effectually destroyed his chances of getting his degree for another year.

Madame Guillemot never knew that she was the involuntary cause of a very promising and assiduous student being "plucked."

On the other hand, she was not ignorant of the impression she had produced on the heart of the philosopher.

A woman always does know when a man is really seriously in love with her. And in order that she might have no manner of doubt about it, Rochemaure, in this matter more ardent than wise, lost no opportunity of letting her know it. She could not take a step without meeting him. When taking a walk, in the salons,

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at the theatre—everywhere, she encountered two philosophic eyes levelled at hers, imploring pity. Did she pass him silently, she heard sighs deep enough to shake a rock to its foundations. If she spoke to him, she felt convinced that before she had uttered half-a-dozen words, he would be sure to declare his passion and crave its requital.

At length, every day almost, the postman brought her inflammatory epistles in which, in language very poetic but extremely unphilosophic, the poor professer depicted his martyrdom.

Sometimes, wearied by his too constant importunity, Madame Guillemot would let slip some slight sign of impatience, quite uselessly, however, for the love-blinded philosopher could not perceive it.

One day, having exhausted all her artillery of defensive arguments, the pretty widow sighed:

"Later—we will see—but for the moment, let me weep for Athanase—Oh, Athanase!"

In an unreflecting burst of sympathy, Rochemaure was naïve enough to reply:

"Yes! We will mourn for him together!"

Madame Guillemot responded by a bright glance of her lovely eyes, wherein was no vestige of a tear, and which very evidently meant:

"You big silly!"

* * * * *

As a matter of fact, however, Rochemaure was not indifferent to Madame Guillemot. He was thirty-five, well built, elegant in manners, dress and language.

He was a professor of the new school of philosophers, who do not consider it obligatory to wear badly fitting clothes and a stern forbidding manner in order to appear *savant*. He was known to possess an income abundantly sufficient to absolve his courtship from any trace of suspicion of cupidity. His future university career promised to be brilliant. He was already mentioned as likely to be the successor of a high functionary in the College of France.

The "College of France" meant Paris, and *entré* to the official world, and this prospect was by no means unattractive to the young and pretty widow.

Rochemaure's candidature for her hand, therefore, had real chances of success, although the poor fellow did not know it.

Who can explain the mystery of the feminine heart? No philosopher of the past or of our own time has ever succeeded in fathoming it. The more Madame Guillemot mentally decided to one day become Madame Rochemaure, the less outward sympathy did she exhibit towards the man, who, to herself, was already accepted as her future husband.

Of all her suitors, he was favoured the least with those little happinesses so coveted by all smitten hearts. To be charged with some little commission; to be permitted to carry an opera glass, to bring a book asked for, to post a letter—little things that give the lover honoured to execute the service inexpressible happiness—all these were granted to the crowd of her followers, but denied to Rochemaure.

This harsh treatment drove him to despair.

He became pale and thin—he was visibly wasting away.

Vainly did he invoke to his aid the stoicism of Zeno, the indifference of Seneca—those wise men of antiquity afforded him no comfort whatsoever. Nothing availed for his consolation, and at last, prompted by the elemental feeling that impels a creature to cry out when in pain, he betook himself to his colleague Chazelles, professor of rhetoric at the same college, resolved to confide his trouble to him and ask his advice.

M. Chazelles was a man considerably older than Rochemaure, a good, big, fatherly person, getting grey, and decidedly barrel-shaped. Winter and summer alike he wore an alpaca vest, a white cravat, and slightly coloured spectacles, which hid a pair of very shrewd sharp eyes. He had three weaknesses; his pupils, whom he worshipped; Virgil, Horace, Molière and La Fontaine, whom he knew by heart; and, in the evening, his pipe, moistened by several *bocks*. He affected a very splenetic gloomy temper; never put in an appearance in any drawing-room, and invariably declared himself ill every year when the day of official New Year's visits came round.

But under this grumpy, crusty envelope he concealed a fine intellect, a good heart, and a marvellous knowledge of men—and women, as will be seen.

Rochemaure poured out his soul to him with perfect frankness, omitting no details of his torments and his statement would certainly have severely tried a heart less kindly and a mind less curious than those of Chazelles. He listened to his friend with admirable patience, twirling his thumbs, and looking up at the ceiling. From time to time he smiled slightly during some excessive outburst of youthful enthusiasm displayed by his friend.

When the philosopher finished his long exposition, his confidant, collecting his thoughts for a moment, replaced his spectacles and stroked his beard—the invariable prelude with him of a speech.

He put a few pointed questions to his young colleague, like a doctor, who, disregarding the unimportant verbiage of his patient's statement, interrogates him on points really vital, to enable him to diagnose his case.

"Your case, my dear friend, is very clear. I have not the pleasure of Madame Guillemot's acquaintance, for as you know, I never go into society; but I recognise her type perfectly well, and it is easy for me to classify her—Unconscious coquette, in essence, a good, honest heart—she will make you very happy."

"Eh! Will make me very——?"

"Why certainly! It's as clear as noonday to me that you will be her husband—her official *fiancé* at all events, in—I was about to say a month, but we will give ourselves a little latitude and say six weeks."

"Do you really think so?" exclaimed Rochemaure, sudden hope being born within him.

"I do think so, or rather, I may say I am certain it would already have happened, if you had gone about the business in the right way. But these philosophers! what do they know? It is only us of the race of poets who have any practical knowledge!

"I tell you, that in a very short time you shall be the lucky spouse of Madame Guillemot. But on one condition only; you must obey me implicitly, blindly, without reflection, unresistingly, like a child. You must do all I tell you, and nothing but that—at the first symptom of disobedience or rebellion on your part, I shall leave you to your own devices, that is to say, to make a mess of the business!"

"Agreed! I swear to obey!"

"Very well—what are you going to do to-night?"

"I am going to pass the evening at Madame Guillemot's."

"You are going to do nothing of the kind. You are going to give me the pleasure of dining with me. Afterwards we will pass the evening by going to hear the

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great physician Richardet's lecture on 'The Microbe of the Dry Rot in Sheep.' It will not be very amusing probably, but it will bring us to eleven oclock: a smoke and a *bock* till half-past eleven, and it will then be time to go to bed."

"But Madame Guillemot will——"

"Madame Guillemot will do without you!"

"But all the other fellows will be there!"

"Oh, you jealous villain! Let them play their last stake, poor devils! They haven't a ghost of a chance!"

"But——"

"Oh! You are beginning to show resistance! The arrangement is off then, so far as I am concerned—good night!"

"No! Don't go, Chazelles. I yield—although——"

"I excuse you the 'although,' since you bow to my will, so *en route*, comrade!"

* * * * *

The next day, Rochemaure went to his friend positively beaming. He held out to him a dainty satin card, perfumed with heliotrope; it was an invitation to dinner from Madame Guillemot. In a "P.S." she had written:

"What were you doing yesterday, Monsieur Unfaithful, that you should have deprived us of your company?"

Chazelles returned the card.

"Good! My plan is working all right—better even than I had hoped! Decidedly, it will not take six weeks, my friend, the thing will be done in a month!

"Now, go sit down at my desk, and write from my dictation:

"'Madame,—I regret very much that I shall not be able to accept your kind invitation——'"

"What?"

"'Kind invitation—'" Chazelles continued to dictate, implacable:

"'Last night, I went to a most interesting scientific lecture, and on Friday I am to attend a demonstration "On the Use of Liquified Air for the Production of Carburet of Calcium." The date of my probable appointment to the College of France is drawing near, and I consider it right that I should show by my presence, my sympathy with my colleagues, who have arranged the demonstration.

"'These meetings are not public, otherwise it would have afforded me great pleasure to send you tickets.

"'I am, Madame.'"

Docile and submissive, Rochemaure had written from his friend's dictation.

"Finish as you like, Rochemaure, but write nothing that savours of the lover, at your peril!"

When the letter was finished, Chazelles read it again.

"First rate!" he exclaimed. "Now, tell me, where does Madame Guillemot usually go for a walk?"

"To the Mall, about four o'clock."

"Very good. We will go there together after leaving the college to-morrow. You must salute Madame in a friendly way—but from some distance."

"Must I not go up and speak to her?"

"Decidedly not!"

"Oh, Chazelles! how cruel you are!"

"You will change your opinion in a month's time, my friend."

After six days had passed, Chazelles gave his friend permission to call on Madame Guillemot, but his visit must be paid on her reception day only, and at the hour when there was always many people there; he fixed the duration of the visit at twenty minutes.

"I will wait for you below!" he said, threateningly.

Rochemaure afterwards gave him an account of the interview. Madame Guillemot had seemed to him gloomy, sad, absorbed.

"Splendid!" said Chazelles, pitilessly. "We shall not have to wait a month!"

After a few days' interval, during which Rochemaure remained under the strict surveillance of his friend, he received another communication from Madame Guillemot—a letter of three pages—very friendly, tender almost, complaining of being "forsaken by a friend, one thought sincere, for whom one had so much esteem, so much sympathy!"

"First rate! splendid! victory!" exclaimed Chazelles.

"What must I do now?" asked Rochemaure.

"Put the letter in your pocket, and in four days from now, go and see Madame Guillemot. I shall be much surprised, if you do not bring me back good news."

* * * * *

But Rochemaure could not wait four days! After three had transpired, he was back at the pretty widow's. He came away wild with delight. Not only had she promised him her hand, she had almost offered it to him.

"Didn't I tell you, my dear friend!" Chazelles responded, to his friend's overflowing gratitude and delight. "Three weeks, even, have not been necessary!"

"But tell me, dear Chazelles, how has the miracle been worked?"

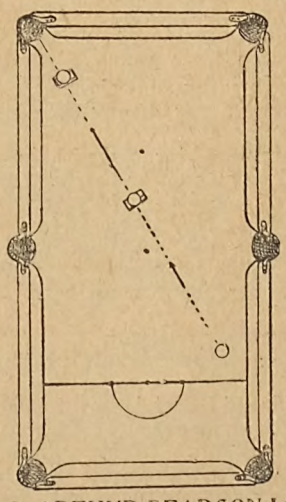
"By simply putting into practice a proverb, which, although it does not figure in the maxims of Aristotle, is none the less profoundly true.

"'Woman is like your shadow; run after her, and she will fly from you; turn your back upon her, she will run after you.' Never forget this wise saying, dear colleague, even in your *ménage*, it will be useful."

W. Pickles.

Fun on the Billiard Table.

A Collection of 75 Amusing Tricks and Games, with Photographs and Diagrams.



Explanation of Trick and Diagram:

Get two outside covers of any sort of the ordinary match boxes, large size. Place them on the billiard table with a ball on each. Put a third ball in a line with a pocket, and the other two balls as in photo. Play a hard shot with the ball on the table into the pocket through the match boxes, which should fly off the table, and the two balls will occupy the places where the match boxes stood. Price 2s. 6d.

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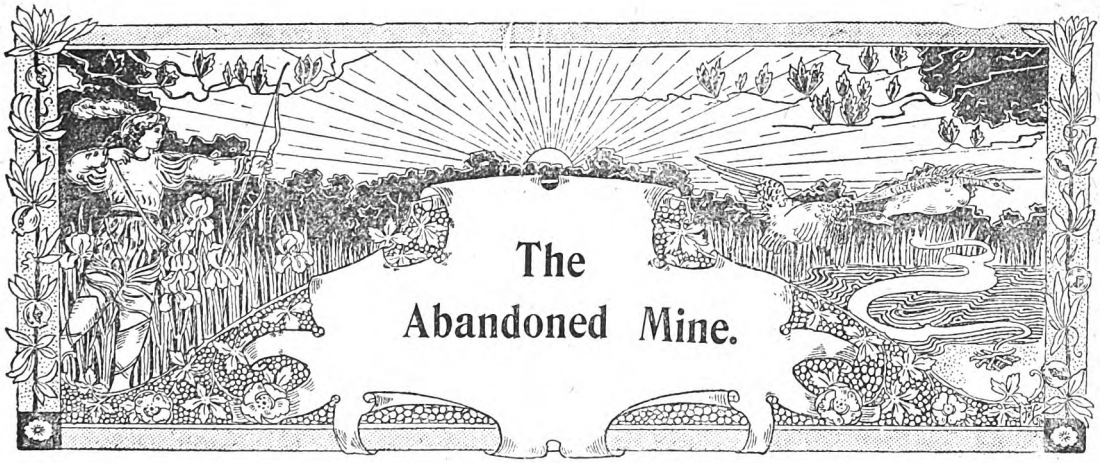

The Abandoned Mine.

A Californian Story.

"Boys, I've been thinkin'."

Bill Williams' three companions who were lounging with him in front of a little log cabin in the Sierra Nevada mountains, sat suddenly erect, and, assuming an air of the most complete astonishment, stared at him curiously for almost a full minute.

"Bill," one of them said, finally, "did you speak jest now, or was I sorter dreamin'?"

"I reckon I spoke, Mr. Brown," Bill Williams replied, carelessly.

"What was that remark you made, Bill?"

"Nothin', only I said I'd been thinkin'."

Brown looked at the other two men and nodded his head, then they all turned their eyes on Bill and scrutinized him wonderingly. After a while old Brown said:

"Bill, are you in earnest?"

"Of course I am," Bill answered. "What makes you ask that?"

"And sure you're thinkin'?"

"Certainly."

There was a long pause, during which Bill Williams' companions looked at him incredulously, but at last Brown spoke again.

"Boys," he said, "it's strange what curious things will happen sometimes. We ain't got no call to doubt Bill's word, but it seems hard to believe that he'd do anythin' so unnatural to him as thinkin'."

Bill was lying on the ground, with his arms folded under his head, and pretended that he did not hear.

"Wonder if this is the first attack of the kind Bill ever had?" George Gray questioned earnestly and with evident alarm.

"I guess it is," Brown replied, shaking his head seriously. "I've known Bill a long time and I never saw him have a spell like this before."

"It came on mighty sudden, d'dn't it?" Luke Jones observed, availing himself of the privilege of having his say.

"Must have," Brown replied. "At supper Bill seemed as well as ever he was."

"Wonder if we oughtn't to git a doctor," from Gray. "I'm fearful Bill's in a pretty bad fix."

"He ought to have some kind of a stimulant to brace him up, at least," Jones remarked. "He must be terribly exhausted after such a violent strain on his constitution, and such a desperate exercisin' of his mind."

"Let me feel your pulse, Bill," Brown said, solicitously, approaching his victim.

"Do you feel much weak?" Jones asked, also looking at Bill with mocked sympathy.

Bill sat up and looked at his tormentors in well-feigned surprise.

"What in the nation are you blame crazy loots talkin' about?" he asked.

"We were afraid that spell of thinkin' you had on might prove fatal," Brown answered.

"Oh you were, eh? Well, you needn't be uneasy. Just because fools like you never think ain't no sign smart men like me never do such things."

There was no reply to this, neither Brown nor his companions seeming to have anything to say. After a short pause, Bill went on, speaking seriously.

"What I was thinkin' about," he said, "is that abandoned mine up the gulch. If it turns out to be as rich as it looks, I'll get a good stake out of it in a short time."

"Then what will you do?" Brown asked.

"I guess I'll go back to good old England."

"And marry and settle down—eh?"

A shadow passed over Bill Williams' face and he became grave in a moment.

"No," he said; "I'll not do that. At least I'll not marry unless——"

Bill stopped suddenly and sat gazing longingly out across the valley that stretched before him. He drew a deep sigh of resignation, and an air of sadness seemed to settle down over him. Presently Brown touched his arm and said:

"Unless what, Bill?"

Bill hesitated a moment, then replied:

"Unless the woman I love becomes free."

"I don't understand," Brown said.

"Why should you?" Bill answered. "It is nothing to you. It is nothing to you that the woman I loved and love yet, was driven into a marriage with another man back there at home, while I was out here in California trying to get a little start in the world so that I could go back and make her my wife. It wouldn't be of any interest to you to know how her father stopped all my

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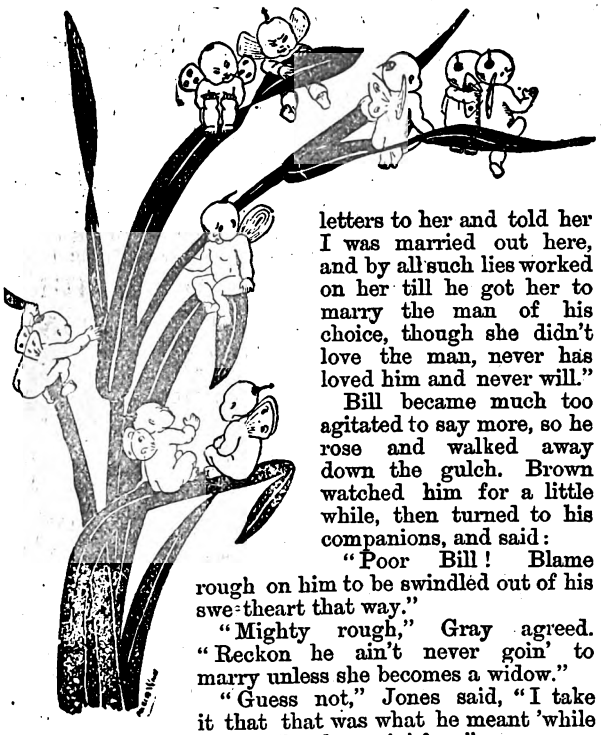

letters to her and told her I was married out here, and by all such lies worked on her till he got her to marry the man of his choice, though she didn't love the man, never has loved him and never will."

Bill became much too agitated to say more, so he rose and walked away down the gulch. Brown watched him for a little while, then turned to his companions, and said:

"Poor Bill! Blame rough on him to be swindled out of his sweetheart that way."

"Mighty rough," Gray agreed. "Reckon he ain't never goin' to marry unless she becomes a widow."

"Guess not," Jones said, "I take it that that was what he meant 'while ago when he spoke about her becomin' free."

Brown took his pipe from his pocket, filled and lighted it, and proceeded to smoke in silence. Two or three minutes passed before he spoke.

"Bill was right worked up," he said, "and I feel kinder sorry for him. I don't want to wish that other man dead, but I can't help wishin' Bill could have his sweetheart an' be happy."

"Maybe he will some day," Gray replied. "Seems like it would be natural, now that he's got a fortune in sight, for him to go back home, git married and settle down."

"He's fixed so far as the fortune is concerned," Jones remarked. "That abandoned mine up thar is as rich as cream, or else I don't know gold when I see it."

"It's rich all right," Brown agreed, "an' I doubt if thar is a more promisin' mine in this whole range. But thar is one thing about that mine that I can't make out."

"What is that?" Gray asked.

"Just this," Brown replied. "Why was that mine ever abandoned?"

Gray and Jones shook their heads, but said nothing, intimating thereby that the question was too deep for them.

"People abandon mines that don't pay to work, and don't give any promise of ever payin'," Brown continued, "But I never before knew a rich-payin' mine bein' abandoned. It's somethin' queer, an' I can't understand it."

Brown was not alone in thinking thus regarding the mine. The same thought had occurred to Bill Williams. To him it appeared remarkably strange that a mine like that should be abandoned. It was a thing entirely beyond his comprehension.

He wasted no time, however, in useless surmising. The mine was his. He had relocated it. He proposed to get the wealth of mineral from it.

Brown and his companions lapsed into silence. They still lounged in front of the cabin and, though an hour had passed, Bill had not returned.

Presently a horseman came riding along the trail which wound up the side of the mountain. He was a stranger and well dressed, and his horse showed that he had travelled over many miles of road. He came on till he reached the cabin and then stopped.

"I am looking for Mr. Williams," he said. "Is he here?"

At that moment Bill came up and he heard the inquiry.

"Williams is my name," he said.

"Are you the gentleman who recently located an abandoned mine in this section?" the stranger asked.

"I am."

"Then it is you with whom I have business. I am a lawyer and I represent the widow of the man who first opened that mine."

"Well, what have I got to do with that?"

"You may have a great deal to do with it and you may have nothing. It all depends on you."

"It does, eh? In that case I guess I have nothing to do with it."

"Not even to recognizing the widow's right to the mine?"

"Certainly not. She has no right to it since her husband abandoned it."

"No legal right, you mean?"

"Yes."

"But how about her moral right?"

"I don't know anything about that. The business of minin' for gold ain't run on moral principles."

"You propose, then, to hold the mine?"

"I do."

"Well you can hold it, of course, I am not going to dispute the legality of your title. But since I am here I want to tell you why I came. Shall I proceed?"

"If you choose."

"In the first place, then, a man left his wife and his home in England and came out here in search of a fortune in the gold fields. After a long struggle and many disappointments he located a rich mine and developed it slightly. Then he went to the nearest town to get supplies and to make other preparations for working his claim, and while he was there he became ill, and, after several weeks' illness, died. In the meantime, however, he had written to his wife, telling her of his rich strike and urging her to come to him. She came, but only to find him dead. She is here now, a stranger in a strange land, homeless, friendless, destitute."

Bill Williams began to shift about uneasily, but he remained silent.

"The woman came to me," the lawyer went on, "and told me her condition with tears in her eyes. She also spoke of the mine her husband had located, and asked me to help her find it. I made inquiries and found that the mine was somewhere in this section; so I rode this way, and back at the next camp I learned that you had relocated an abandoned mine that was very rich. I soon satisfied myself that your mine is the one for which I was searching. Hence I am here."

Bill Williams became quite restless and he fidgeted painfully. After awhile he said:

"And you are here to see if I won't give up the mine?"

"Well, not exactly," the lawyer replied. "I am only here to put the situation to you in its true light. Legally the mine is yours. Morally it is the woman's.

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She lost it through no fault of hers. She lost it through the sickness and death of her husband. Its loss is a crushing blow to her. It was all she had left, and she is now a helpless widow."

Williams turned away and for two or three minutes paced slowly back and forth in front of the cabin. He was quite serious and very thoughtful.

"Well," he said at last, stopping in front of the lawyer, "What do you think I ought to do?"

"I don't like to say," the lawyer replied. "I have stated the situation to you and I prefer to let your generosity suggest what you should do. If you feel that you ought to give the poor woman a few dollars——"

"I don't feel any such thing as that," Williams interrupted.

"I am sorry. I hoped you would be willing to do that much for her."

"What right have I to offer her a few dollars, when, if your story is true, the whole mine is hers?"

"What do you propose then?"

"I propose to let her have the mine. What else can I do, as an honest man? I have my faults, but I hope I ain't low-down sneakin'-mean enough to rob a poor, helpless widow because the law gives me the power. I'll go with you and see the woman and if your story is correct I'll give up the mine to her."

The lawyer was surprised and he did not hesitate to say that he thought Bill would be doing quite enough if he gave up half of the mine. Bill only shook his head.

"Bill," said Brown, "don't give it up. Remember that if you do you can't go back home, and that woman may be free an' waitin' for you."

"I can't help that," Bill replied. "I ain't goin' to swindle no widder woman."

The next morning Bill and the lawyer set out for town. Brown and the other two miners shook their heads and said Bill was "acting foolish," but when he put it to them seriously whether they would do differently under the same circumstances they made no reply, but looked a little sheepish.

In the afternoon of the third day Bill returned, but he was not alone. There was a woman with him, and to the astonishment of the miners he introduced her to them as Mrs. Williams.

"Was she the widder that owned the mine?" Brown asked afterward.

"She was," Bill replied. "Likewise she was the woman I knowed and loved before I came out."

F. WATSON.

FRIEND: "What are you doing?"
Poet: "Writing a poem on 'Autumn.'"
Friend: "But it isn't autumn yet."
Poet: "It will be before the poem is accepted.

BANK CASHIER: "You'll have to prove you are Pat Grogan before I can cash this cheque."

Pat Grogan: "Bedad, that's aisy enough. Here's me photygraph as I had took last week. Ye'd know me anywhere by it."

A BARRISTER tormented a poor witness so much with questions, that the old man declared he was so exhausted that he must have a drink of water before he could say another word.

Upon this the judge remarked:

"I think, sir, you must have done with the witness now, for you have pumped him dry."

WHAT A SHOCKING SHOCK - - - - - - KRUGER WILL GET

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Send it in to us as soon as you like.

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Address all envelopes to "War Editor," Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Pretoria Coupon, S.S.] *May 12, 1900.*

Name.....

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Day..... *Hour*.....

(Pretoria Time.)

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Readers of SHORT STORIES may enter with this Coupon.

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Briton or Boer?

By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

INTRODUCTION.

FOR years past Britain and the Transvaal have been spoiling for a fight, and it was left to that well-known author, Mr. George Griffith, to write this strong and exciting serial nearly four years ago graphically describing a huge war between the two countries.

The story, coming so soon after the Jameson Raid, was read with unusual interest.

Now that Briton and Boer are in deadly conflict it will be interesting to read the story, and see how far the imagination of the author has actually come true.

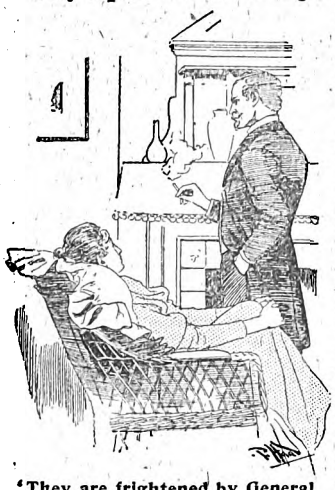
CHAPTER XXVIII.

COMING FACE TO FACE.

THE Council of State sat until pretty far into the night, and when it was over, Prince Paul, who had witnessed and taken part in the whole proceeding, went back to his hotel very well pleased indeed with its issue and probable results. When he entered the sitting-room, he said, in answer to the Princess's inquiry as to the news:

"I think I may say that my presence has had a very good effect. The old gentleman and his councillors are getting decidedly nervous; they see that the bungling and delay which has led to and come out of the hitch with the Free State and the Dutch-Afrikanders of the Cape may have very serious consequences. There is no doubt that they are fairly frightened by General Carrington's success in the North, and that really wonderful exploit of the Johannesburghers.

"They expected what the English would call a walk over. Instead of that they have had three decided slaps in the face, as the English would say again. The rank and file, too, if one may use such a term, are getting very uneasy at the absolute stoppage of all communications. They have an uncomfortable feeling of being hemmed in.



'They are frightened by General Carrington's success.''

"There are very ugly accounts, too, always coming in about the natives. They are disappearing rapidly into their own fastnesses, and making sudden descents on isolated farms. Of course, they know perfectly well that the majority of the farmers are away on service, and naturally take advantage of the fact. Personally, I fancy the Executive feel that if this goes on much longer a good many of the sturdy peasant soldiers of the Republic will take French leave, and go back to their farms. Hence they have decided to push matters to a crisis and give them something else to think about. The final orders are to be issued to-night, and to-morrow they will begin to do what they ought to have done a fortnight or more ago."

This proved to be almost exactly the correct statement of the case. The next morning Pretoria, which had now completely lost the peaceful aspect it had worn a year before, presented the appearance of a great military camp in the fullest activity. Kirk Plein, Markt Plein, Arcadia Plein, and Eastwood Plein were crowded with long waggons, with arched tilts above the hind wheels, loaded with stores and provisions.

The long bullock teams were standing patiently under the yokes; mounted men armed with rifle and bandolier, and dressed for the most part, in short jackets and trousers tucked into long boots, with soft slouched hats pulled over their eyes to protect them from the rain that was pouring down incessantly, were threading their way among the waggons and the oxen, or riding along the streets at a fast tripple.

Some of them were mere stripplings—lads of fifteen and sixteen—who had never heard a shot fired in anger, and others were old, white-bearded men who remembered the Kaffir wars of the Forties and the first Declaration of Independence, men who hated the British rule and all other things British for the same reason that they hated and feared the Powers of Darkness—because it was their religion to do so.

Smartly uniformed artillerymen and more smartly dressed policemen were also riding hither and thither on various errands. The old Artillery Camp by the hospital, overlooking the Johannesburg Road, the Wonder Boom Poort on the Northern Ridge, and the others on Meintje's Hill and Timeball Hill were alive with bustling activity. A constant stream of orderlies, policemen, and members of the Raad and the Executive was passing in and out of the various doors of the Government Building, and altogether it was manifest that a great effort was about to be made.

There, indeed, were those in Pretoria who were beginning to think that it was beginning to be made too late. These were they who grasped the full importance of the extraordinary exploit achieved by the leaders of the Exodus from Johannesburg. It had thrown the country back in the matter of communications to the days when the slow-moving trek-waggon was the only means of transport. The railway and telegraph to the south, the most important of all, were ruined. Before the Exodus it had been a journey of only a few hours from Pretoria to the Free State and

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British borders, but now it was a journey of weeks. It would be months before Elandsfontein Junction could be put into working order, and every bridge from Germi-ton to Volksrust had been destroyed.

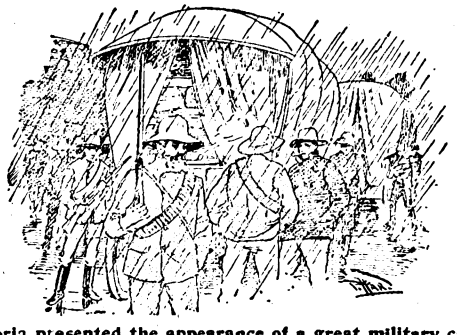
There was practically no native labour to be had, the rains were heavy, and the transport roads over the veld were in a fearful condition. Worse than all, the rinderpest, which had broken out in the Marico district in August, had spread with frightful rapidity, and it was with the greatest difficulty that sufficient oxen could be procured to draw the waggon trains of ammunition, guns, and stores through the mire of the roads and the drifts of the swollen rivers.

All this was greatly in favour of the Loyalists, and did much to counteract the enormous numerical superiority of the Boers. The railway and telegraph system of the British territories were intact, saving in British Bechuanaland, and at the first news of hostilities, Major-General Goodenough had promptly garrisoned De Aar Junction on the Cape Town and Kimberley line, Middleburg, Naauwpoort, and Colesberg, on the line from Port Elizabeth to the Free State border, and Molteno and Burghersdorp on the East London lines as strongly as the miserably inadequate forces at his disposal would enable him to do.

Commander Robertson's successful rush through Standerton and Volksrust, and the destruction of the great bridges over the Vaal and the Klipp River, had further enabled the Commander-in-Chief of Natal and Major-General Cox not only to occupy the almost impregnable passes of Lang's Nek, Amajuba Hill, and the railway route with a respectable force, but also to take up almost an unassailable position commanding Van Reenan's Pass, through which the main line from Port Elizabeth crosses the Drakensberg Mountains into the Free State territory, and to block Sunday's Rest Pass, Muller's Pass, and Botha's Pass, from which the old transport roads converge on the important post of Newcastle.

Major-General Goodenough had also, in view of the possible rising of the rebel Dutch in the Cape, occupied the Hex River Pass, Sir Lowry's Pass, and the Tulbagh Pass, which form the only practicable approaches to the Cape Peninsula from the interior.

Happily he had received the thrice-welcome supply of arms captured by Admiral Dale in Delagoa Bay, while the disaffected Dutch, were still wondering when the signal to rise would be given, and he immediately strengthened his feeble garrisons by sending five thousand of the men whom Admiral Dale had enabled him to arm to the various points where risings were most to be feared, and



Pretoria presented the appearance of a great military camp.

where it was most necessary that communications should be kept open.

It thus came about that before hostilities began on a general scale, the Loyalists, though outnumbered by some five or six to one, held all the strong places along the enemy's frontier, and enjoyed rapid communication with the sea, of which, of course, they had absolute and undisputed control.

The lack of the most modern rifles, the scarcity of machine-guns and field artillery was, however, still the greatest source of danger; for not only were there not enough rifles to arm the Loyalist burghers who had volunteered for service, but even the regular forces of the Cape and Natal were neither uniformly armed, nor had they by any means weapons of the latest type.

Some had Martini rifles and some Martini carbines which had seen a great deal too much service; others had Sniders, and others, again, Lee-Metford magazine rifles. For each of these, of course, different ammunition was necessary, and the supply of any sort was none too great. Their field-guns, too, were mostly of the almost obsolete muzzle-loading type.

The look-out discovered three large steamers.

This deficiency was as suddenly as it was unexpectedly made good.

On the morning of New Year's Day the look-out on Signal Hill discovered three large steamers rounding Robben Island Point. Almost immediately after the *Daring*, which had been on vidette duty, came flying in with red-hot funnels to report. The fleet in Table Bay instantly beat to quarters, the bugles rang out from fort to fort all round the bay, guns were loaded, magazines opened, and everything made ready to blow the strangers out of the water if they should seek to enter or pass without permission.

But, to the astonishment of everybody, they slowed down off the island, and the Blue Ensign ran up astern of each of them. The next instant the private naval signal fluttered from their mains, and was answered from the shore and the flag-ship. This was accepted as sufficient guarantee of their friendly purpose, and the *Daring* was sent back to escort them into the bay.

But before she reached them two had already been recognised from the shore as the crack Union Liners, *Scott* and *Norman*. The third was a war-ship, and a very formidable customer she looked as she steamed into the bay between her two consorts. She was evidently an armoured cruiser of the most powerful type, a heavily-armed battleship with the speed of an ocean greyhound.

The meaning of the opportune appearance of this most welcome addition to the Loyalists forces in South Africa will be explained in due course. For the present, it will suffice to say that all three ships were loaded up to their decks with brand new Martini-Metford rifles, machine and field-guns of all types, and some two thousand tons of ammunition for all classes of arms.

By the time they had discharged their cargoes in the Alfred Dock, General Goodenough saw to his delight that he could now arm every Loyalist in South Africa, regular and volunteer, with one pattern of rifle, which practically everyone knew how to use, and give them as much ammunition as they could shoot away in six months. In fact, to all intents and purposes the coming of this seeming gift from the gods came near to doubling the effectiveness of the Loyalist fighting force.

The Union steamers, *Greek* and *Gaul*, were lying inside the breakwater, and the *Greek* was at once loaded with an ample consignment of rifles, machine-guns, and ammunition, and sent round to Durban under the protection of the

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new cruiser, something of whose origin character may be guessed from the fact that she was named the *Rhodesia*.

The "G." class of Union boats are specially built for crossing the bar at Durban, and when the *Greek* rounded the bluff in company with her formidable-looking consort, answered the signal from the Fort, and steamed up into the beautiful harbour with her good news and most welcome contents, the good tidings flashed up to Maritzberg and the border, and all over the Colony.

It was better, as the Governor declared, than a reinforcement of ten thousand men, for there were five thousand loyal men already in the Colony, who knew the country like a map, and who could ride and shoot with the best of the Boers themselves, and who nevertheless had vainly asked for arms to protect their homes.

Another excellent effect of the arrival of the *Greek* and the *Rhodesia* was that which it produced on the twelve or fifteen hundred disaffected Dutch burghers throughout the Colony who only wanted an opportunity to rise and join their brother rebels at the Cape.

The main point of the original conspiracy had been to catch the Loyalists unarmed as well as unprepared. What was wanted was a massacre, not a war, and now this pious hope was frustrated, and the would-be rebels saw that when they did rise, it would be to fight out a bitter struggle with men who were fully alive to their danger, and prepared to fight to the last gasp for the honour of their flag and the safety of their homes.

Still, as events proved, the welcome aid had not come a day too soon. By the time the new arms and ammunnition were properly distributed, there were some thirty thousand Loyalist regulars, volunteers, and burghers in the Cape Colony and Natal.

It took a whole fortnight to instruct the majority of these last in the use of their new weapons, and such elements of drill as were necessary to convert them into something like a disciplined fighting force, and hardly had this been done when the result of the Council of State held at Pretoria on the fifteenth of January was made manifest.

On the night of the seventeenth, the news flew all over the British territories in the south that thousands of the rebels had risen in arms all round the Free State border, and in the interior of Cape Colony, and on the top of this came rumour after rumour all through the night vauntingly spread by the rebels, that the Free State burghers had at last joined the Transvaal, and were advancing to the south and east and west, in three great columns, on Norval's Pont, Kimberly, and Charlestown, to join hands with their brethern in the Cape and Natal, and drive the hated English into the sea.

Colonel Baden-Powell read it, and passed it back.

There was little sleep that night in the loyal towns of British South Africa, for everyone felt that now the beginning of the end had come, and that Briton and Boer stood at length full-armed and face to face on the eve of a struggle that was to decide the mastery of half a continent.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The Trick that Failed.

For once in a way it happened that rumour fell short of the truth. It was quite true that the Boers, after the union of the Free State and the Transvaal, had decided to divide their forces into the three great columns, numbering some twelve to fourteen thousand men, each fully equipped with artillery and machine-guns, which were to march respectively on Fourteen Streams and Kimberley to the west, Norval's Pont and Burghersdorp to the south, and on Charlestown to the east; but rumour had nothing to say about the column of five thousand men which, according to the President's strategy, was to be launched against General Carrington's entrenched camp under cover of the negotiations for the release of the prisoners taken at Figtree Fort, simply because rumour knew nothing about it.

As it is impossible, even for an essayist in prophetic fiction and his readers, to be in more places than one at the same time, the fortunes of these four several divisions of the Boer forces will have to be followed more or less in succession in order to obtain a clear view of the course of events which led up to the climax of the desperate conflict which both sides now recognised to be inevitable.

As first in time, as well as in geographical position, it will be best to begin with the attack on Major Carrington's position. This, it will be remembered, was at Palapye, the then terminus of the railway, and the capital of King Khama's country. This may be described as a half-way house between Mafeking, the old terminus, and Buluwayo, the southern capital of Rhodesia. It is two hundred and ten miles from Buluwayo, and about three hundred from Mafeking, but, of course, the existence of the railway made it as a matter of fact, very much nearer to the point from which the Boers had to attack it.

The men forming the Commando were drawn mostly from the Marico and Rustenberg districts, which lie between Pretoria and the border of British Bechuanaland. The advantages of this policy were obvious. The column would instantly increase in strength as it went on. Orders had been sent by telegraph along the route, which is intersected by very fair roads, and so the field-cornets would have their men already mustered to join the march. There would be no need to trouble about commissariat, and under the circumstances the journey could easily be made in four days, as in fact it was.

The ever-growing column marched almost exactly over the greater part of Jameson's route to Krugersdorp, but, instead of striking south from Zeerust to Malmani, it held on due east to strike the line of railroad near Ramathlabama, where it almost touches the Transvaal frontier. As the President had said, the Boers held possession of the line and rolling-stock up as far as Shoshong, which is about sixty miles south of Palapye. Hence they were able to concentrate rapidly in the neighbourhood of Khama's deserted capital, and by sunset on the twenty-fifth of January, five thousand Boers were within twenty miles of the entrenched camp.

The three messengers had been sent on a day ahead to present the President's letter to General Carrington accepting his terms, and proposing that there should be a cessation of hostilities for a week in order to enable the released prisoners to return to their homes, and to permit him to perform his part of the bargain.

When the General read the letter he smiled grimly and passed it to Colonel Baden-Powell, who happened to be smoking a cigar with him in his quarters. The Colonel read it, and passed it back, and the two officers looked at each other and smiled in silence, but with considerable meaning.

Then the General laughed aloud, and said:

"The old man seems to forget he isn't treating with the Downing Street people now. I think we had better keep our eyes open, hadn't we?"

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"Well," said Colonel Baden-Powell, "if Uncle Paul wanted to shake hands with me just at present, I should like to feel sure that he hadn't a revolver in the other hand. That letter's too polite and friendly altogether. Don't you think, General, that Bryan and his Matabele chaps might enable us to read between the lines of it?"

"That's the very thing!" said the General, touching the bell on the table beside him. "Just ask Major Bryan to step this way as soon as you can find him," he said to the orderly who presented himself at the door. "Now, between ourselves," he went on, "it seems to me that there is a plant in this. I didn't make my letter over-cordial, and I'm sure the old man and his people must be frightfully sore at what we've done, and if he hadn't something up his sleeve he wouldn't be playing the polite letter-writer like this.

"I don't like that idea of the armistice either. When a Boer proposes an armistice it generally means that he wants time to steal a march on you. These fellows don't fight according to the rules of war—they don't play the game, and I shouldn't be at all surprised if old Uncle Paul didn't spend that week in massing eight or ten thousand men on the border and cutting us off from Mafeking and Kimberley. I'll see him, well—canonised first.

"Ah, Bryan!" he went on, holding out his hand to that now distinguished officer as he entered the room, "we've just received this from His Honour at Pretoria. Just run your eye over it and tell me how the idea of the armistice strikes you."

Major Bryan took the letter and looked at it, handed it back with a little laugh, and said:

"It means, General, that he hasn't got them there already, he wants that week to bring up a biggish force, pay us a surprise visit, and arm the prisoners of war, and cut us to pieces while we are resting on our arms and obeying the terms of the armistice."

"How the deuce did you get hold of that idea, Bryan?" said the General looking up sharply at him. "Arm the prisoners? Confound it, I never thought of that, though I did think of the other."

"It's not altogether my own idea, General," said Major Bryan laughing again. "I got it about ten minutes ago from old Umzilizi. He has been 'smelling' out those three fellows since they came back to camp, and he tells me they have been having a long yarn with Cronje and Branjes, and that fellow Rex, who says that he is descended from the Royal Family, and he came to me and told me that he thought there was some plot for a rescue afoot, and now I see this letter I think that one has only to put two and two together to make out that Uncle Paul wants that week to do it in; at least that's my opinion."

"And mine, too," said the General and Colonel Baden-Powell, almost in a breath. "Well now, Bryan," the General went on, "I'll tell you what I want you to do. Those Matabele fellows of yours are the finest scouts you can possibly have for the work, and you've got them so splendidly in hand now that I don't think they will make any mistakes. I want you to take them quietly out of camp at night-fall to-night, without any of the prisoners knowing anything about it, and find out how far the line is actually clear to the south, and whether there is any respectable force of Boers in the neighbourhood. By that, of course, I mean within twenty or thirty miles of the place.

"I'll leave the details to you. If you find any, of course I shall be glad to know how many of them there are about and what sort of a position they are in. Don't do any fighting if you can possibly help it. We want information, nothing else, at present. If they are going to try and rush the camp you will have plenty of fighting later on—as much as ever those black war-dogs of yours could wish for, for if there is any dodge in this, it will cost our old friend of the Christian principles pretty dearly."

"Very good, General," replied the Major, saluting and going towards the door. "I shall probably have some news for you soon after daybreak."

"I hope so," said the General. "Oh, by-the-way, just tell Captain Murray to come and see me if you meet him. If not, send someone for him."

A few minutes later Captain Murray made his appearance—a short, active, hard-featured little man, tough as pin wire, with keen blue eyes that had looked on many a hard-fought fight in many a distant part of Africa.

Colonel Baden-Powell opened the door, and the two Boers slouched in.

"Murray," said the General, as the little man drew himself up stiffly and saluted, "I've had an altogether too polite letter from Pretoria about the prisoners, and I fancy the old gentleman is going to try and steal a march on us. Major Bryan is going to take his men out scouting to-night, and I want you to have your armoured train in readiness to start at daybreak for the south. Have an engine on each end in case one is disabled, and see that you have plenty of ammunition. You may want it. Meanwhile, will you see that all prisoners are brought in during the day and confined strictly to their location till further orders. But first call out a corporal's guard and have Mr. Cronje and Mr. Brantjes brought here at once."

Captain Murray saluted again and vanished.

In about five minutes there was the sound of a measured tramp out-side.

The sentry outside the door challenged. Colonel Baden-Bowell got up and opened the door himself, and the two Boers slouched in, looking sullenly angry and very much disgusted, in the midst of a file of men with fixed bayonets.

"What is this for, General?" asked Cronje, in a surly tone, without waiting for his captor to speak.

"It's usual for gentlemen in your position, Mr. Cronje," said the General drily, "to wait until they are spoken to. You might remember that another time, please. However, I'll answer your question, for that's what I sent for you to tell you."

"But why are we suddenly put under arrest like this?" broke in Brantjes angrily. "Are you not making terms for our release? Why are we not on parole as gentlemen should be?"

"Because, to be perfectly frank with you gentlemen," said the General, with an unmistakable emphasis on the last word, "I don't think it would be advisable, to say the least of it. But I didn't send for you to argue with you on points of military etiquette. I have just had this letter from the President. Will you be good enough to read it, Mr. Cronje. You see His Honour proposes an armistice of a week in which to conclude the exchange.

"Personally, I see no need for it. Forty-eight hours would be ample, or even twenty-four. Your people are in possession of Fort Elebi. You can be escorted there and turned over to them, though I should expect you, as Commandant, to give me a pledge that neither you nor any of

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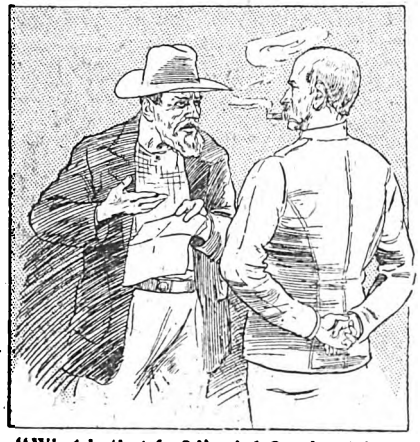
your men should bear arms against us until the exchange prisoners have been handed over to our people at Koomati.

"However, as His Honour proposes the week's armistice I will accept it, but with a reservation. I shall take the liberty of keeping you all under arrest until the week is up and I receive assurances that the President has performed his part of the contract."



"What is that for?" cried Cronje. "That is insult and tyranny."

The faces of the two Boers, which had been getting more cheerful while the General was speaking, suddenly flushed dusky red with anger and disappointment.

"What is that for?" cried Cronje, taking a half step forward towards the General, holding the President's letter in one hand and tapping it with the fingers of the other "That is insult and tyranny. Is not this enough? Has not the President promised to do what you ask him? If you accept the armistice, why do you not abide by it and observe it?"

"Do you remember, Mr. Cronje, how you observed the armistice at Potchefstroom a few years ago?" said the Colonel in a cold, dry tone, and looking him straight in the eyes. "You kept innocent women and children starving, then, for eight days longer than the laws of war and the commands of your superior officer gave you any right to do.

"We are not going to starve you, but I'll tell you this for your own information and guidance. If a shot is fired against this place before the week is up, I'll hang you in sight of the whole camp, and if there is the slightest sign of revolt or treachery among your people, I'll march every tenth man out to the trenches and shoot him. Now, during the week you will take up your quarters in the location with your men. Tell them what I have said, and for your own sake and theirs see that there isn't any trouble. Attention, the guard—march!"

Both the Boers made as though they would have uttered some angry retort or remonstrance, but the guard instantly closed round them, and the order to march was so peremptory and the bayonets gleamed so unpleasantly near, that they thought better of it, and walked out scowling sullenly, and muttering to each other in Dutch.

During the rest of the day the General, acting on a principle which is the golden rule of warfare with such enemies as the Boers—to suspect everything and take nothing for granted—called his staff together, and took every precaution that he would have taken if he had been certain that the camp would have been attacked that night.

Sentries were ordered to be doubled at sundown, vedettes were sent out on all sides, a powerful field search-light in a crow's-nest on a mast in the centre of the camp was got ready for instant use, and the Maxims planted in four other crows'-nests at the angles of the main laager were cleaned ready for action.

Strong outposts were thrown out to keep the northern road open towards Tati, whence the Imperial troops were now daily expected, and shortly after dusk the Matabele Legion disappeared from the camp in twos and threes, and Major Bryan, after a conversation with Miss Madge Morrison on a subject which it would be bad taste to make public, left to take command of them.

CHAPTER XXX.

A Battle in the Dawn.

The first half of the night passed absolutely without incident, but a few minutes after midnight, Major Bryan passed through the southern entrance to the camp, leading his horse, which showed every symptom of having been ridden very hard for some considerable distance. He went straight to the General's headquarters and asked to see him.

Like every other man in camp that night, General Carrington was, as it were, sleeping on his arms, and so he no sooner learnt who his visitor was, then he received him.

"So you are back sooner than you thought, Bryan?" he said, as he returned his salute by stretching out his hand. "Well, did you find our friends nearer than you expected?"

"I found them a bit to the south of Limonie, and within fifteen miles of the camp," was the answer. "From all accounts I should say there were about five thousand of them. They have about half-a-dozen Maxims, two Gatling guns, and two field-guns, which look like 15-centimetre Krupps. They are coming along very cautiously, and are evidently shy of the kopjes at night. It's possible they may wait till daybreak to come through. I see that the batteries have been withdrawn, but they are still in the hills; from that I venture to presume that you have no objection to them coming through."

"Not a bit, most excellent of scouts," said the General with a hearty laugh. "So you found that out, did you? and what did you do with your men?"

"I left them lying very low in the hills, half of them on each side of the road. When I saw that the batteries were withdrawn, I thought they might be useful there, after our friends had accepted the invitation to come through. We shall have a runner in every half hour to report progress.

"Quite right, quite right," said the General, patting him in a fatherly sort of way on the shoulder. "Now, go and get something to eat and drink, and have a couple of hours' sleep, or more if you can. We must be ready for them by four o'clock, and we shall have a pretty busy day in front of us."

It was evidently the intention of the Boers that it should be a very busy day. Their column now numbered nearly 6,000 men, that is to say, about twice the force under General Carrington's command including the twelve hundred men who now formed the Matabele Legion. They had brought their artillery and ammunition up by train almost as far as Limonie, a little village about eight miles south of the camp, and strong bodies of scouts had preceded the train, thrown well out on either side of the line.

They had fully expected to find the kopjes about Limonie held in considerable strength, but when they found them apparently deserted, Jan Van Beers, or Groot Jan as he was familiarly called, who was in command, put this down to the bad generalship of the *rooibaatjes* and to the supposition that the English were only just strong enough to hold the town itself. Captain Eloff, who had joined the column with two hundred and fifty of his best men from Krugersdorp, strongly dissented from this opinion.

"Don't go into the hills until daytime, Commandant," he said, when he heard the order to advance given. "Carrington is no fool. If he has left the hills open it is for a purpose, but you won't know it until you get in."

"*Ja!* and *he'll* know it, too, when we do get in," said Groot Jan with a laugh. "He doesn't know we are coming at all. These *rooibaatjes* are always asleep till the

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shooting wakes them up. No, no, yonker, forward and get the guns into position. We shall be at the town by daylight."

Captain Eloff could only shrug his shoulders and do as he was told, and Groot Jan led his column warily through the valley and planted his Gatlings on either side of the north entrance to cover his retreat should the town be too strong for him, or to play with effect on the English troops, if he could persuade them to leave their entrenchments and fight him in the open.

It must be remembered, too, that he was trusting considerably to the hope that by the time the fight began Cronje and his men would have managed to possess themselves of arms and create a diversion in the centre of the enemy's camp.

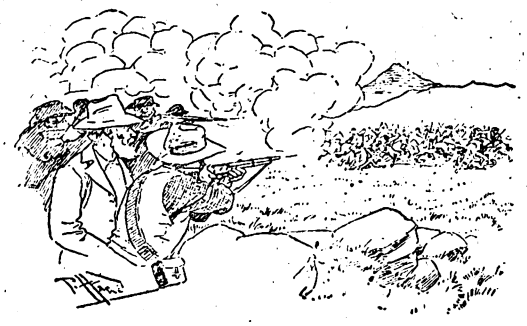
While the guns were getting into position he sent out a couple of columns of a thousand men each to line the hills about the road, while he himself led the main body of three thousand men, with the two Krupps and the Maxims, preceded by strong scouting parties on either side.

Somewhat to their surprise, and in total ignorance of the fact that their every movement was being watched by the keen eyes of Major Bryan's dusky scouts, and that news of all his doings was being carried on swift and silent feet to the camp, they advanced without let or hindrance to within a couple of miles of the entrenchments, and here Grout Jan thought it prudent to halt and wait for daylight.

They were now within shell-range of the town, but not a light was to be seen, nor was there the slightest sign of any life about the place. The scouting parties crept up closer and closer, till they were within rifle-shot of the forts and earthworks. It really looked as though they had caught the English utterly unaware, and could take the town at a rush.

Many of the younger Boers were eager to have a try for this, but a wholesale remembrance of what had befallen the Northern Commando prevented their officers from allowing it.

Shortly after four the dawn began to lighten the eastern sky, and then to his delight Groot Jan dimly saw a column of horse file out of the southern entrance to the camp into which the railway ran, and head southwards towards his main body, as though they had not the remotest suspicion of the presence of an enemy. They were dressed as troopers and mounted police, and they came on just as though they were merely bound on an ordinary expedition to the hills



The Boers allowed them to come within about six hundred yards, and then opened fire.

to see that all was safe. Presently another column issued from the eastern entrance as though going towards Fort Elebi. The Boers allowed them to come within about six hundred yards of their scouting parties, and then they opened fire.

The pale flames and puffs of smoke rose apparently all round them. Scores of saddles were emptied, and then, to the utter amazement and dismay of the Boers, there arose from the rest loud yells and hoarse shouts that most unmistakably came from Dutch throats, and, instead of using their rifles, which they could hardly do, seeing that they were unloaded, the survivors threw up their arms and rode, still yelling at the tops of their voices, back towards the trenches.

The roobaatjes were among them cutting and thrusting.

The next moment Commandant Groot Jan and his men got a lesson in new tactics that they never forgot till the day of their death. A ray of dazzling white light flashed down from a point high above the centre of the camp. It swept slowly round in a semi-circle, and whenever it fell upon man or horse, converging torrents of bullets from half-a-dozen machine-guns burst upon the spot and swept every living thing before them. Round and round it went, ever accompanied by the roar of the guns and the spattering hail of bullets. Hundreds of shots were fired at it before the blinded and disgusted Boers learnt that of all possible marks a searchlight is the most nearly impossible to hit.

At last it fell on the field-pieces and the artillerists who were training them on the town. Almost at the same instant a dozen streams of flame leapt out from different parts of the entrenchments, and a score of great rockets soared up into the air from the hills on either side of the Boers.

The seven and twelve pound mélinite shells began bursting round the guns, the rockets blazed out into globes of blue fire, and every Boer took to his heels and ran for cover at his best speed, for the story of what had happened among the kopjes on the Pioneer Road was known to everyone of them by this time, and they had no desire to experience the effects of dynamite dropping on their heads from the clouds. But the dynamite descended all the same, and they saw the rocks smash up round them and heard them come whistling in fragments about their ears, frightening them more than hurting them, it is true, but still producing a very good moral effect.

Then they heard the hissing and puffing of steam behind them, and presently, to their horror, they saw a train draw out from the camp and run with ever-increasing speed towards where their two deserted guns were lying. Seemingly these infernal English were going to do all their fighting by machinery this time, for the train was armoured from end to end, and bristling with the muzzles of guns pointing in all directions.

Still, they could not leave their only two pieces of cannon to be taken into the camp and turned against them without a struggle, and Groot Jan himself, at the head of a thousand mounted men, galloped down to the guns to hold them till they could be dragged away. At the same time the Maxims were turned on to the advancing train, and met it with a storm of bullets which was speedily replied to in kind.

Meanwhile another strong body of Boers had ridden out from the cover to the eastward, with the evident intention of pulling up the rails behind it and cutting off its retreat. At the same time there came the clatter of hoofs from within the camp, and a couple af troops of Lancers and

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Hussars rode out at a sharp trot and wheeled round to the left.

The searchlight flashed out again and streamed full into the eyes of the dazzled Boers. Then, with a thunder of hoofs and the rattle and clash of steel and a deep shout of fierce joy the *rooibatjes* were among them, cutting and

He led them in gallant style to storm the trenches.

thrusting and slashing with all the fury that betokened a long unpaid debt of vengeance. Then the searchlight vanished, and before the bewildered Boers knew what was happening, the Lancers and Hussars had got clear and reformed. Again the light flashed out and again they thundered in, and the revengeful steel did its bloody work.

The Boers could not have seen to shoot, even if they had had time, so they could only defend themselves with their clubbed rifles against the slashing sabres and the fast-thrusting lanceheads.

The light disappeared once more, but they did not wait for a third charge. Cold steel was not in their line at all and never had been, and those few minutes had taught them that, man to man, and horse to horse, the long despised *rooibaatje*, was as good as they were, and possibly a trifle better.

So when the light blazed out for a third time they broke and scattered and galloped back to their cover, followed by a sweeping hail of bullets from the Maxim in the nearest crow's nest.

Down the line a desperate and bloody struggle was going on for the possession of the two guns, but the desperation and bloodshed were nearly all on the side of the Boers. They had never fought an iron-clad train before and they did not quite know what to make of it. Their horses, too, plunged and shied in ungovernable fright every time they approached it, for the inventive genius of Major Bryan had suggested the happy idea of fitting syrens to the whistles, and every now and then these let out the most heart-shaking and blood-curdling screeches that ever woke the echoes of the African kopjes.

Storms of bullets were rained upon the train, but it had been prepared for just this kind of fighting. It was plated with boiler-iron from end to end, and the vital parts of the engines were similarly protected, and it's iron horses drew it to and fro unconcernedly through the storm while the Maxims, Gatlings, and Maxim-Nordenfeldts, which were mounted behind shields on its six trucks rained death on every man and beast that was out of cover. The carriages of the two guns were soon smashed to splinters by the shell fire from the earthworks, and the guns themselves lay useless on the ground.

Do what he could, Groot Jan could not get his men to face the fire from the train. They had not come to fight steam engines, they said, and so they rode off to the cover of the hills to think things over. But here they met with a new enemy no less terrible of its kind than the one they had fled from.

This was composed of Major Bryan's rocket corps, and the Matabele Legion which had been quietly concentrating on the other side of the kopjes to the south. So the fiery serpents poured into the air about them or came hissing into their midst as they were retreating and the dynamite charges pounded the rocks to pieces, and rent the trees and shrubs to splinters on every side of them. Then the rocket fire stopped, and the Matabele Legion formed and charged. The men had been given bayonets and taught to use them as they had used their stabbing assegais. The Boers took what cover they could, and met them with a close volley which did considerable execution, but before they could fire again, the rush of the Matabele was upon them and the steel had begun to do its work.

While this was happening to the south, Captain Eloff, seeing how badly matters were going, had got about eight hundred men including his own, together, and, taking them round to the north of the town, he dismounted them under cover. Then, putting himself at their head, he led them, in gallant style to storm the trenches. Twice he took them with splendid courage, right up to the earthworks, and twice they were swept back by the fearful fire that was poured upon them. While he was rallying them for yet a third attack, they heard a rattle of steel to their right and the sharp command in English: "Trot, gallop, charge!" and the next moment two troops of Hussars were riding over and through them and using their sabres in such terrible fashion that scarcely two hundred and fifty unwounded men got back to their cover.

Groot Jan was now beginning to see that, unless the fight was to go utterly against him, a desperate and decisive effort must be made, so he drew off his men, or those of them that were still able to move leaving some fifteen hundred dead and dying on the field, and made for the kopjes to the south-east, under cover of his Maxims and the three Gatlings; but even here a new surprise awaited him, for as he gained summit of the first kopje, from which he could overlook the whole camp, he stopped suddenly and pointing gway to the northward, cried:

"*Allemachtij!* There are more of them—*rooibaatjes* and those *verdomde* sailormen! I think we have got into a bad place."

CHAPTER XXXI.

Victory and Bad News.

The approach of the men of the Leicestershire Regiment and the Naval Brigade with their train of field artillery and machine guns from the North caused, as may be well believed, as much satisfaction to General Carrington as it had caused disquiet to Groot Jan and his disgusted subordinates.

In the half light of the early morning everything had been in favour of the camp and its defenders, but now it was broad daylight, and the marksmanship of the Boers, ensconced as they would be among the stones of the kopjes, would soon put bayonet and cavalry charges out of the question. More than this; they might possibly be able, unless speedily dislodged, to take up strong positions, defended by their Maxims and Gatlings, and hold them until artillery was brought up to shell the camp. Hence, as it would thus be necessary for the General to take the offensive at once, the addition to his fighting force was doubly welcome.

A guard of honour, composed of Lancers, Hussars, and Cape Mounted Rifles, was at once sent out to receive them and bring them in, and at the same time the armoured train was filled with men and sent down the line to co-operate with the batteries to the south, and keep the road open. The Matabele Legion, with a detachment of troopers, was sent off to join the guard at the Lotsani Drift, storm Fort Elebi and blow it up; after which they were to work south-westward round the hills, and occupy the road between Limonie and Shoshong.

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Hostilities were suspended while the reinforcements were entering the camp, but about half-an-hour later the Boers saw a very strange thing happen.

There was a fresh breeze blowing from the north-east, and they had taken up their position among the hills about the road to the south-west. Presently the English began to fly kites from behind the earthworks, and several great square things rose into the air and came towards them with packages of something hanging where the tails should have been.

The Boers watched them with uneasy apprehension, and presently they began to fire at them, of course, without the slightest effect, and at length the nearest of them stopped right over their heads.

They saw it give a little jerk and then jump up. The same instant the package parted from it and fell amongst them. Those who escaped saw a blinding flash, heard a sharp, stunning roar, and felt the ground shake beneath their feet. The rocks split asunder, and flew far and wide from the focus of the explosion, and the air was poisoned with a choking, deadly gas. Then came another shock and another, and then a storm of shot and shell from the entrenchment and the crows'-nests, and where each shell burst, the deadly fumes of the exploding mélinite followed the shell-splinters and fragments of rock, and killed where they had spared.

Those of the Boers who kept their heads tried to reply with their Maxims and Gatlings, but the moment these showed their positions seven and twelve-pounder shells began bursting about them, and then came the last act of the brief and bloody drama. While the shells from over a score of guns were still raining on the kopjes, the Boers saw three columns of foot file rapidly out of the eastern, southern, and western gates of the camp. They saw the newly-risen sun flashing upon hundreds of bayonets, and as the columns swung out and came on at the double for the kopjes, they flung themselves down and began to shoot for all they were worth, and many a brave fellow bit the dust before the open space was passed.

The Bluejackets reached the cover first. Then with a rousing cheer they went up the slopes like cats, and in a few moments more the Boers saw the deadly bayonets flashing among the stones and trees. Then suddenly the shell-fire stopped, and bullet and cold steel began to do

The English began to fly kites from behind the earthworks.

their work. It was shoot and stab, stab and shoot for about five wild minutes as the three columns—the Bluejackets, the Leicestershire men, and the Cape Rifles—fought their way up in a series of rushes which left the Boers but little time either to load or take aim.

The moment the bayonets had got within striking distance the fight was virtually over. The Boers had none, and could not have used them if they had had them; but they speedily learnt what terrible weapons they are in British hands.

For a while they fought with stubborn heroism, with their backs to the rocks, loading and firing till they were shot down or stabbed; but in the end they lost heart, and

The moment the bayonets got within striking distance the fight was virtually over.

flung away their rifles and ran. It was Amajuba over again, but the other way about.

The triumphant British chased them over the hills and down the southern slopes, and there they found the armoured train and the battery waiting for them. As they fled down in disorderly masses into the open with the lines of pitiless steel behind them, the guns on the train opened on them, and from behind the train troop after troop of cavalry—the Hussars, Lancers, Mounted Police, and troops of the old Buluwayo Field Force—which had come through by the road, swung out at a quick trot and streamed across the road, cutting off all hope of retreat to their base in the south.

Captain Eloff and a few others of the bolder spirits, including Groot Jan himself, seeing that all was lost, put themselves at the head of those of their men who were still able to ride and fight, and made one desperate charge for freedom. But they had first to ride through a withering storm of death from the train, and when this stopped and the British Horse came charging in amongst them scarcely half of them were left for the sabres and lanceheads to do their work upon.

Groot Jan and the three other principal Boer leaders were flung wounded to the earth and taken prisoners, but once more Captain Eloff, almost by a miracle, and aided no doubt by his own strength and courage, fought his way through with about a score of his men, and four days later reached Nijlstroom with the tidings of disaster.

The other survivors surrendered unconditionally, seeing that there was nothing else to do. All but the leaders were deprived of their arms, given three days' provisions from their own stores and told to be off across the border. General Carrington did not carry out his threat to hang Commandant Cronje, as he considered he was sufficiently punished by being forced, as he had been, to ride out from the camp at the head of the disguised prisoners in order to draw the first fire of the attacking force, but having recaptured him, he kept him close prisoner with the other leaders and took him into Shoshong, which surrendered without firing a shot, in a very different state to that in which he had hoped to return to it.

(To be continued.)

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "The Lost Provinces," by Louis Tracey, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. S. Chorlton, 227 Spa Road, Bolton, Lancashire. Attempts for this week's prize may deal with ANY SUBJECT and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, May 14th. Post-cards only, please.

A Large Appetite and a Small Lunch.

A SHORT time ago one of Her Majesty's inspectors, paying his quarterly visit to Broadmoor, asked the chief warder if there were any complaints.

"There is a rumour," he said, "that the prisoners are underfed here, so I wish to interrogate the prisoners on the question, as the authorities are anxious to know the truth."

On entering the cell of the first prisoner he noticed that the atmosphere was close and stuffy, and inquired of the prisoner why the ventilator was closed.

"Well, your honour," replied the prisoner, "the last time I had it opened a wasp flew in and carried off my blooming lunch while my back was turned."

S. C.

Bother the Coal Bounty.

A FRIEND of mine whose garden is close alongside the main line at a busy junction where the down trains are stopped to allow the up trains to pass as it is a single line, thought of a good plan to replenish his coal cellar.

He rigged up a very good effigy of President Kruger and stood it up in the garden in full view of the drivers and firemen of the trains.

The supply of coal he got surpassed all his expectations, and it says much for the firing of our drivers and firemen, that although he has only tried the experiment six days he has had to put up six fresh Krugers.

One fireman on being remonstrated with by his driver, replied:

"Bother the coal bounty, let's down with old Kruger!"

C. S.

Newspapers Never Err.

ONE day a gentleman called at the office of a certain newspaper, and said to the editor: "Sir, it is announced in your paper that I am dead."

"Well," replied the editor, "if it is in our paper, it is correct."

"It is not correct, for here I am alive," rejoined the other.

"Well, it cannot be helped," said the editor.

"But I expect you to contradict it," said the injured man.

"No, I cannot do that," said the editor, "as we never contradict anything that appears in our paper. I will do the only thing I can do. To-morrow I will put you in the list of births."

A. K.

With a Proviso.

A CERTAIN magistrate who is blessed with a tremendous head of hair, which is generally in a state of wild disorder, was questioning a youthful witness to make sure that he comprehended the character and importance of the oath he was about to take.

"Boy," he said, with his severest and most magisterial manner, "do you feel sure that you could identify me after six months? Now, be careful. Think before you speak."

"Well, your worship," replied the boy, after a prolonged survey of the magistrate's portly figure and rugged features, "I ain't sure, but I think I could if you wasn't to comb your hair."

T. R.

Proof Positive.

CROSS-EXAMINATION in the witness-box is a pretty severe ordeal for most people, but some men do not mind it.

"Are you sure that occurrence was on the seventeenth of the month?" asked the lawyer, in a tone which seemed to imply that certainty upon such a point was almost beyond the reach of the human intellect.

"Yes," said the undismayed witness, "it was the seventeenth."

"Now remember," continued the lawyer, with increasing solemnity, "remember you are under oath. How do you know it was on the seventeenth?"

"Because the day before——"

"Be careful what you say now. Go on."

"Because the day before was the sixteenth, and the day after was the eighteenth."

W. K.

Rough on Father.

RECENTLY a gentleman was out for an afternoon's walk, when he came across a friend, an inspector in the police-force, who took him to view some of the cells at the police station.

On returning home the fond father was trying to explain to his little five-year-old the sights he had witnessed during the afternoon.

A few days after he took the little fellow for a ride on a tram-car. As they proceeded on the journey the boy espied a policeman, and at once exclaimed aloud:

"Is that the policeman who took you to the station the other day?"

The gentleman alighted from the tram-car at once with every eye turned towards him.

S. L. W.

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But Yet an Orphan.

It is only the professional beggar who has passed through a severe course of training, who remembers his part on all occasions. A lady was guilty of setting a very effective trap for a little boy, who one day came up to her in the street, whining.

"Please, mum, a 'alfpenny, mum. So 'ungry, mum. Ain't 'ad nothink to eat since yesterday mornin', mum. Do, mum. I'm a poor horfun, mum."

"Poor boy! An orphan?"

"Yes, mum."

"Dear me! where do your father and mother live?"

"In Queen Street, mum."

E. M.

Where Was O'Flynn?

An Irish magistrate has a habit of allowing his voice to drop so low that his words can with difficulty be heard. The story is told that he was sentencing a prisoner not long ago when a man in the court-room shouted:

"Speak louder, your honour! Speak up!"

"Turn that man out of the court!" said the judge.

The order was obeyed and the proceedings went on.

"Call the next case," said the judge, when he had finished with the prisoner in whose case the interruption had occurred.

"Terence O'Flynn!" called the clerk; but Mr. O'Flynn did not appear.

It was discovered that Prisoner O'Flynn had disappeared, and his absence could not be accounted for until someone said:

"May it please your worship, Terence O'Flynn was the man you just sent out for shouting to your worship to speak up."

T. A. S.

Worse and Worse.

A famous musician was once asked by two vocalists to decide which of them sang the better. The day being appointed, both parties exerted themselves to the utmost, and when they had finished, the musician, addressing the first, said:

"As for you, sir, you are the worst singer I have ever heard in my life!"

"Ah! ah!" said the other exulting, "I knew I should win the wager."

"Stop, sir," said the doctor, "I have a word to say. As for you, sir, you cannot sing at all."

K. F.

Settling a Doubt.

There is a venerable and benevolent judge in Paris who, at the moment of passing sentence on a prisoner, consults his colleagues on each side of him as to the proper penalty to be inflicted.

"What ought we to give this rascal, brother?" he says, bending over to the right.

"I should say three years."

"What is your opinion, brother?" turning to the left.

"I should give him about four years."

The Judge (with benevolence): "Prisoner, not desiring to give you a long and severe term of imprisonment, as I should have done if left to myself, I have consulted my learned brothers and shall take their advice. Seven years!"

H. R.

Told Them So.

One of the boys brought home his arithmetic lesson, and his mother, after watching his struggles for a time in silence, offered to help him.

"Oh, no," said he, with a look of scorn, "you can't do it, that's certain."

As the mother was a clever woman she naturally felt somewhat nettled at this, and insisted on her ability to solve the problem.

She did so to her own satisfaction, but not to the boy's.

He declared that she did not do it right, though he could not tell what was wrong.

"We'll leave it to father," said she finally.

The father had been to the University and had taken high honours in mathematics.

He said that the mother's method was the right one, and indeed the only one.

Unconvinced, the boy went off to school the next morning. At noon he came home triumphant.

"There, I told you so!" he shouted, as he entered the house. "You did it wrong!"

"What was the matter?" both parents asked.

"Well, you left out two 'sinces' and a 'hence,'" was the youngster's convincing reply.

E. T. S.

Where Are Ye?

First Highlander: "Whether would you pe killed wi' a sma' pullet or a pig shell, Tonal?"

Donald: "Wi' a wee pullet, to be sure."

First Highlander: "An' foo that, Tonal?"

Donald: "Weel ye see, if ye get struck wi' a wee bullet, there ye are, but if ye get struck wi' a big shell, where are ye?"

G. W.

Paddy Again.

An Irish labourer was told by his foreman to bring a couple of wheelbarrows from a workshop about two miles distant.

Paddy went for them, but finding that he could not manage to bring the two at once, brought back one.

The foreman, seeing him come with only one of them, asked him why he did not bring the two by putting one upside down upon the other.

"Och, sure, sor, I didn't think of that!"

So off went Padddy to bring the other. After half an hour had passed he returned, puffing and blowing, with two barrows.

"I don't want three barrows, my man."

"Sure, sor, I did not bring three barrows."

"What did you do with the first one that you brought?"

"Begorra, I took it back to bring the other."

B. C.

We Want a Bright Cover Top-Line!

A cheque for a guinea will be sent to the person who forwards, on the back of a post-card, what we consider to be the brightest and best top-line for the cover of *Short Stories* that should, in some way or other, embody reference to the merits of *Short Stories*—that is, of course, if you consider any exist—and should be as crisp as possible.

All attempts should arrive at this office not later than the first post on May 14th., and marked "Top Line."

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A Secret Service Mission.

GENERAL POLTRIKOFF leant back in his easy chair, and swinging smartly round on its pivot, confronted his secretary, Major Shelmotin, who was reading extracts from a document to his chief.

Shelmotin paused in his reading, for he knew that when the chief turned round the axis of the easy chair he meant to speak to him.

"This is too bad, Shelmotin," growled the general; "too bad of Knutoff. He is three months at Coonst; feeds us with comfortable weekly reports, each one more hopeful than the last, and now he calmly confesses he cannot obtain it. Nonsense! He is an idiot! Every man has his price."

"It is provoking, your Excellency," answered Shelmotin.

"I expected it would be difficult; but it certainly is not impossible. I know Coonst very well. Knutoff ought to have succeeded, and he is certainly wrong to give up. He is too young for a diplomatist."

"What are we to do now, Shelmotin?" asked the chief, whose heart was bent on the Star of the First Class of Saint Nichevo.

The major was his right hand; his memory, his encyclopædia, his amanuensis, his factotum, without whom he was thoroughly lost and incapable of managing his department—the Secret Service section.

"Send another officer to Coonst" suggested Shelmotin.

He knew his chief, and had aspirations of his own. He saw before him the Second Class of Saint Nichevo, and a lieutenant-colonelship.

"But whom shall I send? Tell me?" urged the general.

Shelmotin rose from his chair, and said, "Send me, your Excellency."

"Send you?" gasped his chief. "What am I to do without you, when we two can scarcely get through the work? You alone know all my ways. No, Shelmotin, I cannot send you."

"Well, your Excellency, it is only a suggestion," replied the major calmly. "You know we must have it. The reputation of the department is at stake. I have named the only man who, I believe, can get what we want."

"But what am I to do without you?" asked his chief, but in a different tone.

"Your Excellency overrates my services altogether, and can do very well without me for a month or two," answered the major. "Captain Pokoff can take my place whilst I am away. What matters a little accumulation of arrears, if we get it?"

The general mused for a while, and then said: "Very well, Shelmotin, so be it. You can go. Are you sure you can get it?"

"Quite sure, your Excellency."

Two days later the major took the train for Coonst, the capital of the neighbouring State, and having arrived at his destination, engaged a suite of apartments, as became his wealth and position, in an hotel not far from the War Office. The ostensible object of his visit to Coonst was to consult Dr. Comte about his eyes.

* * * * *

The major dined every day at the *table d'hôte*, which was patronised by several of the higher non-military officials of the War Office, with whom he soon became acquainted. They knew his position. He had called in full uniform at the War Office, and they were charmed with his pleasant manners. Their staff officers did not treat them like equals as he did.

The state of his eyes did not permit the major to go much abroad, and especially not after dark.

"Comte forbids me stringently to expose myself to the night air. I am a prisoner within my four walls. I wish you would take pity upon me, and come and see me," he said.

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They did take pity on him, and came and saw him. They came more frequently and stayed later. They played cards. The major was such a charming host. The best champagne and capital cigars were set before them.

A couple of weeks passed by. Every night there was card-playing in the major's apartments. Not for extravagant stakes. The Privy Secretaries, Privy Registrars, etc., are not liberally salaried. The major played quietly and studied his visitors evening after evening. When they left him, he opened his windows and sat down to think. He weighed the men in his mind, and at last came to a conclusion.

"Pritzelwitz is the fellow for me," soliloquised he. "He is a born gambler. How he clutches the money! how his eyes sparkle, his hands tremble! And he is in the Fortification Department! The little beggar is always hard up. I'll try him."

The next day was a Sunday. The sun shone brightly and the major looked out of his window when he spied Pritzelwitz stepping jauntily along the street, with the air of one who enjoys a holiday. The major coughed; Pritzelwitz looked up and lifted his hat.

"Come up, like a good fellow."

They chatted and smoked, drank a glass or two of wine, and at last Shelmotin proposed a game at *écarté*.

"It is a sin to play when the sun shines," said he apologetically; "but I dare not go out."

Little Pritzelwitz did not object to play. He preferred gambling to the sunshine in the park. He won largely—that is, for him.

After half an hour the major rose, yawning, and said, "I have no luck. Let us go to luncheon. You must come and give me my revenge to-night. I declare I must have dropped two hundred marks."

Pritzelwitz was delighted, and promised to give the major his revenge that night.

They began playing again in the evening. They played till late at night. At first, luck favoured little Pritzelwitz, but in the end it forsook him. He lost all his money.

"Never mind, give me your I O U," urged the major. "Better luck next time."

When Pritzelwitz left, excited with wine, but pale and unwilling to go, he left his I O U for eight hundred marks behind him. The major had promised to give him his revenge the next night.

The next night came, and again they played. The major denied himself to the others in order to be undisturbed with his guest. Not that he cheated. Only he kept cool and collected, and his visitor was excited to the last degree. That night the major's winnings were nearly doubled, and all in I O U's. They were to play again the next evening. Poor little Pritzelwitz was in a dreadful state of mind. The hours seemed to be days. Evening would not come. At last he found himself opposite the major again. After he had lost two or three games, the major, whose deal it was, said:

"By-the-bye, I must go back to Reimsbery the day after to-morrow. Dr. Comte has discharged me as cured. You must try and win to-night, for I am afraid I cannot give you your revenge to-morrow. I am engaged to dine with our ambassador."

Poor little Pritzelwitz! His eyes seemed to start out of his head. He drank off a tumbler of champagne and rose from the table. He stalked about the room, wringing his hands and muttering to himself. The major watched him calmly, cards in hand. At last

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CURABLE

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Pritzelwitz sat down again, and the major dealt. But his opponent seemed quite unnerved.

"What is the matter with you?" asked the major.

"I can never pay you what I have lost," gasped the poor little man, covering his face with his hands.

The major rose from the table and laid the cards aside.

"Debts of cards are debts of honour," said he slowly, and emphasising the *honour*. "I expect these I O U's to be paid before I leave, or I shall be obliged to inform Colonel von P. that you pocket your winnings, but are unable to pay your losses."

"For heaven's sake, major, do not ruin me!" entreated the unhappy victim. "The slightest rumour will cause my instant dismissal."

"I regret it very much, but I must follow the dictates of honour," replied the major stiffly. "Persons without means, should not play for money."

"I'll blow my brains out! Poor Paulina!"

The major shrugged his shoulders.

"I'll pay you off in instalments," entreated poor Pritzelwitz. "I'll insure my life, you shall not lose a penny; I promise it."

"I expect you to redeem those I O U's before I leave," said the major.

"Then I may as well make away with myself at once," said Pritzelwitz, in despair. "My life is ruined; why prolong it?" He took up his hat and opened the door.

"Wait a moment," said the major.

Pritzelwitz shut the door, and remained standing hat in hand.

"I'll make you a proposal," said Major Shelmotin. "You say you are a ruined man if I inform against you. Very well, I will return you your I O U's and give you a thousand marks besides, if you bring me to-morrow, before eleven in the forenoon, the plans and details of the new fortification of Petritz."

Pritzelwitz was speechless.

"Do what you like," continued the major. "The plans interest me very much; they are worth to me the price I offer. If you bring them you are free. Now, good-night."

He bowed him politely out of the room.

Pritzelwitz was quite confused; he did not know what to do, but he was sorely tempted. He could have got the plans easily enough, but his conscience smote him. He walked round and round the square near the hotel, till somebody tapped him on the shoulder, with the question.

"Wool-gathering, Kurt?"

It was his colleague and future brother-in-law—Paulina's brother, Fritz Dimpler.

"Oh, Fritz! Oh, Fritz! I am a lost man. Save me!"

"Don't be an ass, Kurt. Fire away! What is the matter? Tell us, old fellow," said Fritz. When he had heard the story, he gave a low whistle. "You are an idiot, Kurt. You don't deserve help; but for my sister's sake, and on your word of honour that you will never touch a card again, I will help you. Come along!"

They went to Fritz's chambers, and an hour afterwards Kurt left buoyantly, and with firm step.

The next morning, at eleven a.m. precisely, Pritzelwitz called on the major. He shut the door cautiously, and produced a carefully folded packet which the major opened and examined. It contained a number of plans, of sections, distances, and sketches, bearing the superscription, "Royal Fortress of Petritz." The major nodded his head, satisfied, and gave Pritzelwitz his I O U's and the promised sum.

Before the major left next day, he received an official acknowledgment from the treasurer of the "Invalid Warriors' Fund," thanking him for his generous donation.

"Little ass," muttered the major, as he stepped into the cab. "Judas repented himself of the blood-money."

* * * * *

General Poltrikoff was in high glee. A telegram had informed him, two days ago, that Major Shelmotin's cure was perfect, and now the major himself had returned and brought the long-coveted plans. They were spread out on the general's table. Presently General Espinoff, the Director of Fortifications, came in.

"So, you have got them at last?" said he eagerly.

General Poltrikoff pointed to his table. Espinoff sat down and examined the plans. He shook his head, and hummed and hah'd.

"I know those plans," said he, at last. "A most remarkable coincidence. Yet it cannot be. Just wait one moment."

He went away, and came back with the plans of his own pet creation—the new fortification of Key Castle. He placed them side by side with the others, and they agreed in the most minute details.

"You have been done, Shelmotin," said he. "I suspected it as soon as I saw your plans. The topographical details of Petritz would not admit of such a system of outlying forts as in these plans. You have brought back a copy of my own fortress. You need not have gone to Covnst for it."

"Saint Nichevo!" muttered General Poltrikoff aghast.

Major Shelmotin bit his lips and remained silent, but General Espinoff went away laughing, for Knutoff, was his nephew, and he enjoyed Shelmotin's discomfiture.

General Poltrikoff could not get on with Shelmotin after that. He had become used to Popkoff, and obtained a distant command in the Kalmuckian Steppes for his former factotum.

K. Wilson.

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HOME NOTES

contains a PAPER PATTERN of this CYCLING SKIRT.

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Send me an envelope (stamped and addressed) and I will tell you how to remove all superfluous hair free of charge. (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Miss E. V. (Room 3), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

A SUM of from 12s. to 25s. per week can be earned in spare hours or evenings by either sex everywhere.—Send addressed envelope for particulars to Box 24, Eclipse Works, 89 Aldersgate Street, E.C.

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Mr. Skidmore's Family Pet.

THE other morning, while Mr. Cole, the proprietor of the circus and menagerie of that name, was standing at the door of his show, a tall, sunburnt, bald-headed man approached and said:

"Be you the wild animal man, m'ster?"

The proprietor of the "Double Mammoth Mastodon Aggregation," admitted that such was the fact.

"Then," proceeded the other party, "I think I'll get you to make me an offer for a large-sized healthy lion I've got."

"Good specimen, eh?" asked the circus man.

"Good? Well, I should say so. Measures eleven feet from the tip of his nose to the tip of his tail. Caught him myself when he was a cub. Just four years old to-morrow."

"Hum—good appetite?"

"Appetite? Well, when he ate my wife's sister it didn't seem to disagree with him. My wife took on dreadful, and wanted me to shoot the poor thing. But I told her that he probably suffered a good deal as it was, and, that as most likely he'd catch rheumatism and things from her, we'd better call it square."

"And did she?"

"Well, she got reconciled after a while, especially as Johnny seemed fond of playing with the children. One morning, soon after that, my wife's mother—whole family lived with me, you see—didn't come down to breakfast. As all her false hair was hanging over the chair, and Johnny crawled out from under the bed, we saw at once that the heavy hand of affliction was upon us again."

"Looked that way didn't it?"

"Well, as you may suppose, the old lady—that's my wife—took on a good deal, and sent for some prussic acid right away. But just then arrived a gold medal from the S.P.C.A., awarded on account of my forbearance in the Aunt Maria business, and so I got her calmed down after a while."

"Pacified her, eh?"

"Yes, I managed to arrange a reprieve for Johnny, You see, I was awfully fond of pets, and tender-hearted, and all that, you understand. I argued that the poor animal didn't know he was doing wrong. That smoothed things over for another month."

"What happened then?"

"One day I sent Tommy, our youngest boy, for some sugar, and he took Johnny along for company. Now, whether it was because Johnny was fond of sugar or not I don't know, but he came home alone; and as soon as we noticed a peculiar kind of bulge on his ribs, about as big as Tommy, we concluded that the dread archer had marked another Skidmore—my name is Skidmore—for his own.

"The whole family took on like mad, and Mrs. S. was about to put a powder-keg under Johnny and touch it off herself, when I pointed out that it wouldn't do to desecrate our offspring's tomb in that way."

"After that you kept the animal chained?"

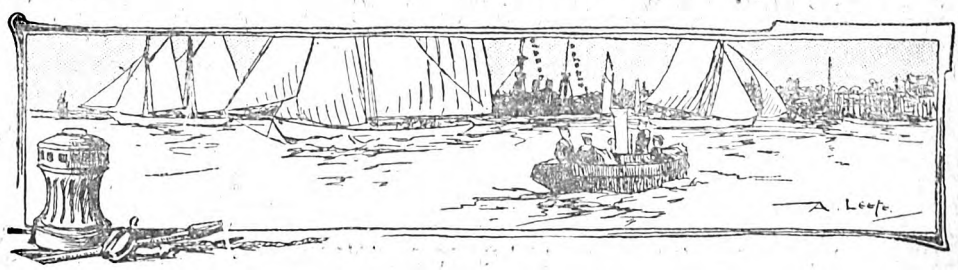
"Well, no," said Mr. Skidmore, with a deep sigh. "The fact is, I set out to get a chain several times, but one thing and another prevented, until one day last week I actually missed the old lady herself. I looked about for her for a couple of days, when somehow of a sudden it struck me where she was," and the bereaved husband again sighed heavily.

"Don't wonder you want to sell the beast," remarked the menagerie man, after a pause.

"Well, I do, and I don't," said Mr. Skidmore, abstractedly. "There's so many memories and things clustering round Johnny that it seems like parting with one's whole family, as it were. On the other hand, though, now that the old lady is gone, I feel as if the insect had—well, had outlived his usefulness, so to speak."

"All right," said Mr. Cole, "bring him round after the performance."

"There's a mint of money in him as a family pet," said the other, earnestly, as he shook hands with the circus proprietor, and turned on his heel. W. G. H.



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TO OBTAIN A SPOTLESS COMPLEXION.

MANY people have a strong prejudice against the use of Powder upon the face—and not without good cause, for the majority of toilet powders are absolutely harmful to the complexion. Even when made of the finest materials the ingredients are such that they clog the pores, and eventually give the skin a dry, withered appearance. LILLIE POWDER is a carefully prepared MEDICATED toilet powder, containing not only delicate antiseptic qualities, but also a series of SKIN TONICS and FOODS. It is therefore absolutely beneficial to the complexion, and its constant use will strengthen and nourish the supersensitive nerves of the skin, thus restoring and preserving the bloom and freshness so typical of English beauty.

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THE BRAIN GYMNASIUM

In these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, Short Stories, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by first post on Monday, May 21st, 1900.

No. 112.

When a quarrel is aided with a piece of wood, what bird expresses the result?

No. 113.

Form a square word with the equivalents of the following:

"A METAL," "TEMPER," "A MONSTER," "WANT."

No. 114.

What does this describe?

JOIN ME AT AND
I
S

No. 115.

My whole looks very short, but in reality I am very long; in fact, neither my beginning nor my end has ever been settled. I influence individuals, I influence nations. I am even able to work wonders. Yet two pronouns will give you all that is necessary to form me.

No. 116.

Complete the fourth phrase, dealing with the letters in the same order:

1. NOTABLE MAN.
2. NOT ABLE MAN.
3. NO TABLE MAN.
4. NOT A

No. 117.

Form the name of a British seaport by using the centrals of the following:

A SERPENT.
A MARINE PLANT.
CENSURE.
A UNIT.
A CEMENT.
TO ENDANGER.
CRAZED.

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Nos. 88 to 93.

The prize of £2 has been awarded this week to William Robertson, of 7A North Woodside Road, Glasgow, whose solution was the first correct one dealt with.

Each of the following has been awarded a copy of "The Knight of the King's Guard," by Ewan Martin:

Miss H. Warner, Park House, Ifield, Crawley, Sussex.
Stuart B. Findlay, 5 College Street, Leicester.
C. D. Frazer, 53 Gordon Road, Southend-on-Sea.
Miss E. Kellehar, 57 Bannockburn Road, Plumstead.
George Humphreys, 19 Colville Street, Nottingham.
H. Goldsmith, 56 Campbell Road, Southsea.
J. P. Gross, 19 Rue des Belles Feuilles, Paris, France.
Mrs. Henry Fay, 55 Moyne Road, Dublin.
James M. Wood, Heath Vale, Hatherley Road, Sidcup.
John Robertson, 1 Balgray Place, Dundee.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES.

Nos. 94 to 99.

No. 94. The Indian Ocean. North America. Constantinople.

No. 95. A little darkie (dark e) in bed with nothing over him.

No. 96. Un-IT-ed. Un-TI-ed.

No. 97. PIGTAIL.

No. 98. 113 1-8ft.

No. 99.

HEAT
EACH
ACRE
THEM

TOWARDS PRETORIA.

By JULIAN RALPH.

A Story of the War to the Capture of Bloemfontein.

EXTRA CROWN 8vo,
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JEWELS IN VELVET CASES.

In a case lined with silk or velvet, there is where the lady who has diamonds is apt to keep them. Not because they are likely to suffer from exposure. Oh, no, a diamond can stand anything in the line of weather, and any amount of rough usage. But it is small and costly; easy to lose and hard to find; and much desired by those gentlemen who, like Mr. Wemmick, are fond of portable property.

In the body, which is the most delicate and beautiful of velvet cases, nature keeps those jewels, the vital organs. Unlike diamonds these precious things do not well endure exposure and careless treatment. Especially are they injured by cold. Therefore, so far as possible, they are surrounded by warm flesh and protected from chance shocks or blows from without. Fortunately for their owner no thief covets them, as, once taken from the case, they have no value.

What we may call the Koh-i-noor among these living gems is the *liver*. It occupies the warmest and cosiest nook of the body, well sheltered from cold. Yet it is not thereby made secure from evil. Its gravest dangers come from the other jewels in the case, and from the owner who has power over them all. Now let us see what these facts have to do with the cases of Mr. Robert Lee and others—you and me, perhaps, among them.

"In November, 1895," writes Mr. Lee, "I began to get weak and low. My appetite was poor and the little food I ate gave me a deal of pain about the chest. I was unable to sleep well at night, and in the morning felt exhausted and tired."

Mr. Lee's statement that he was "tired" after lying on his bed all night is physiologically correct. Fatigue is loss of strength whether from labour or any other cause. You will note, however, that while fatigue arising from healthy exertion is overcome by food and sleep, this kind cannot be overcome save by curing the disease which produces it.

"My feet," continues Mr. Lee, "were swollen and painful, and a *tendency to gout* manifested itself. I felt low-spirited and thought I was breaking up. Presently I became so weak I could scarcely move about. Month after month I remained in this condition. Having heard so much about the efficacy of Mother Seigel's Syrup in complaints of this kind, I began using it, and soon found benefit. I could eat well, and food agreed with me. I continued to take it, and improved from week to week. It was not long before *the gouty symptoms entirely disappeared*, and I was in my usual good health. Should you desire to publish this letter you may feel free to do so."——Robert Lee, Postmaster, Tealby, Market Rasen, Lincolnshire, Feb. 22nd, 1898.

Whether Mr. Lee is or not subject to gout, and has, therefore, had experience of it, he does not tell us. In any case he will please take notice that the immediate cause of gout is what is technically called reversion of the liver, allowing the formation in the blood of uric acid, a poison which, settling in the joints, creates the inflammation and the pain; while the partial inaction of the kidneys causes the bloating. He and others who have suffered in the same way will be wise to look sharply after those "gouty symptoms." For gout is not an ailment all by itself; it is a member of a very dangerous combination, which may include affections of the heart, skin, nerves, brain, bladder, and kidneys.

The whole trouble begins, as so many troubles do, in the stomach. Digestion, to a greater or less degree, fails; fermentation of food in the digestive organs follows; the bowels become costive; the rotting substances remain in the stomach and intestines; the blood is filled with impurities; the over-worked liver refuses its duty; the change from food to body-tissue is not completed; the deadly uric aid is formed in dangerous quantities, and several diseases, of which gout is one, are set going. To correct this state of things is always difficult and often impossible.

The proper treatment is, by the aid of Mother Seigel's Syrup, to purge the blood, and indeed the whole system, of the fearful corruption engendered within it, and to tone the stomach, liver, skin, bowels and kidneys to act powerfully and naturally. The Syrup may be relied on to do this even when other remedies have sadly fallen short. And for us all the lesson is this:—Cure indigestion in its early stages by taking the Syrup when the first signs of it appear.

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GIGANTIC SPRING SALE, 1900.

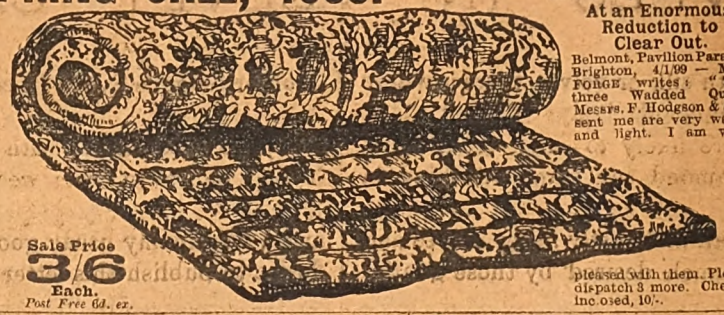
ILLUSTRATED BARGAIN CATALOGUES OF CARPETS, HEARTHRUGS, TABLE LINEN, CURTAINS, etc., POST FREE, if mentioning *Short Stories*, 12/5/1900, when writing.

A Stock of 10,000 PATENT WADDED QUILTS, TORALIUMS, OR BED COVERS

(as Illustration).

Covered with Oriental Reversible Soft Sateen with double border. Size 54in. by 60in. These Quilts are offered below anything in the Wholesale Trade, and cause the greatest consternation to the buyer, wondering how they can be produced for the money.

SPECIAL OFFER.
Three Quilts for 10/-, or Six for 19/6, or Twelve for 38/-



Sale Price **3/6** Each. *Post Free 6d. ex.*

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Belmont, Pavilion Parade, Brighton, 4/1/99 — Mrs. FORGE writes: "The three Wadded Quilts Messrs. F. Hodgson & Son sent me are very warm and light. I am very pleased with them. Please dispatch 3 more. Cheque inclosed, 10/-.

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In REVERSIBLE RICH TURKEY PATTERNS, measuring 6ft. long, and 3ft. wide. These HEARTHRUGS have gained a world-wide reputation for MAGNIFICENCE, CHEAPNESS, and UTILITY, having no equal. Registered New Designs, and considered Works of Art. Thousands of Repeat Orders and Testimonials received, giving the highest satisfaction. **SPECIAL OFFER.—Three for 5/9; Six for 11/3; Twelve for 22/-**

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Admittedly the Cheapest in the World. *Woven without seam. Altogether superior quality, with handsome border to correspond. A marvel for excellence and beauty. Thousands of Repeat Orders and Testimonials received, giving the highest satisfaction. When ordering, please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.*

6 ft. by 9 ft.	7/6	10½ ft. by 12 ft.	18/-
8 ft. by 9 ft.	9/-	12 ft. by 12 ft.	21/-
6 ft. by 12 ft.	10/6	9 ft. by 15 ft.	19/6
9 ft. by 9 ft.	11/-	12 ft. by 13½ ft.	22/-
9 ft. by 10½ ft.	13/6	12 ft. by 15 ft.	25/6
9 ft. by 12 ft.	15/-	12 ft. by 18 ft.	30/-
9 ft. by 13½ ft.	16/6	12 ft. by 21 ft.	35/6

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Octagon Villa, The Lizard, R.S.O., 15/8/98.—J. CARWARDINE, Esq., writes: "I am very pleased with the Carpet you sent me. I have saved 50 per cent. by giving you the order. I paid half as much again to a local tradesman for Carpets the same quality a year ago. I have never been so pleased of any former purchase."

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9 ft. by 9 ft.	28/-	12 ft. by 16 ft.	69/-
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(Regd.) We will send you THE LARGEST GENUINE REVERSIBLE CARPET in BRUSSELS PATTERN WITH RUG ever sold at the price, direct from the Looms to any address on receipt of amount. Suitable for drawing-room, dining-room, bedroom, etc., bordered and woven in Brussels patterns, as an advertisement for our goods, thus saving any middle profit. Remember these are woven, and are made of a material almost equal to wool. Thousands of these Carpets have been already sold at double these prices.

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Size.	Each.		Size.	Each.
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6ft. by 7½ft.	3/11		9ft. by 15ft.	12/6
6ft. by 9ft.	4/9		12ft. by 12ft.	12/9
7½ft. by 9ft.	5/11	SALE	12ft. by 13½ft.	14/6
9ft. by 9ft.	7/6		12ft. by 15ft.	15/9
9ft. by 10½ft.	8/6	PRICE.	12ft. by 18ft.	19/6
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A Reversible "Prudential" Hearthrug (Regd.), to match above Carpets, sent for 1/6 extra, size 2yd. long and 1yd. wide. Special Offer, Three Hearthrugs for 4/3, or Six for 8/-, or Twelve for 15/6, sterling value.

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THE LOT 10/6

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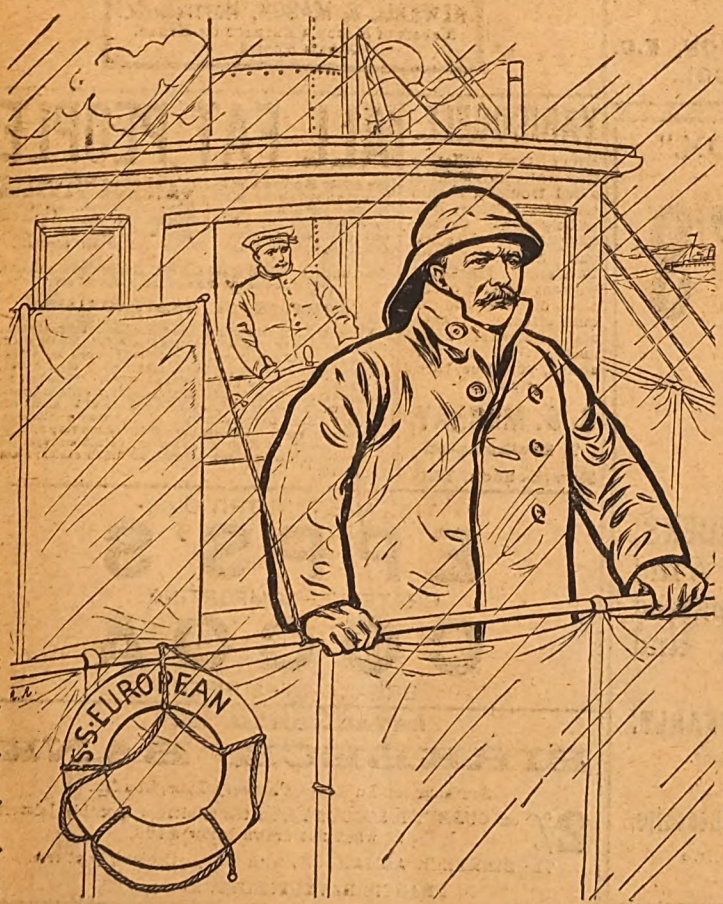

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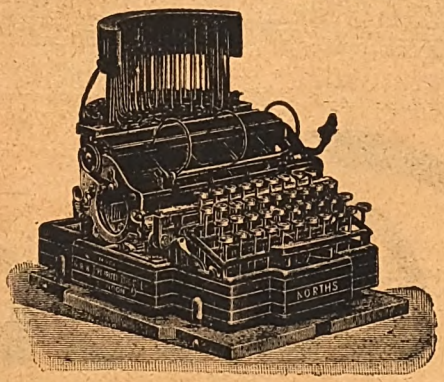

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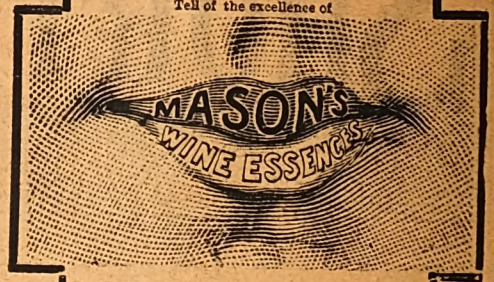

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THE RENEGADE

NIGHT was beginning to fall on the 23rd of December, 1880. Paul Sanders and his wife were seated by the wood fire in the larger of the two rooms of the homestead that was by courtesy called Sanders' Farm, situated four or five miles from Standerton, in the Transvaal territory. They had been sitting in silence for some minutes; it was now broken by Mrs. Sanders.

"There's trouble coming, I tell you," she said quietly. "We have already heard rumours that a Republic has been proclaimed and that the Boers intend to drive out the British. Which side are you going to take, Paul?"

Sanders raised his eyes from the fire to her face and then lowered them again without speaking.

"It's more than twenty years now since we left Natal," continued Mrs. Sanders in a tone that had a trace of sorrow and regret in it. "Yes, it's more than a score of years since Nance married the only man she ever cared a rap for and you turned your back on our only child because you did not think much of Roberts. You were a good man up to that time, but you began to go wrong from that moment. You turned your back on the British and we came into the Transvaal; and ever since then you've been gradually turning more and more into a Boer."

Still no reply came from her husband; he sat motionless, with scarcely a sign of life.

"It was only the memory of our younger days when we were so happy, and my love for you, which made me stick to you in spite of your turning a renegade and altering your name from Paul Saunders to Paulus Sanders. You're a weak-minded man, and if you hadn't had me by your side you would have been far worse than you are now—and, heaven knows, you're bad enough, Paul. You've stooped to thieving and lying, and some of the rascals about here have got you under their thumbs, but I don't believe you're so bad as to take up arms against your own countrymen. And that's what you've got to decide now."

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The woman did not seem to expect an answer this time, for she turned her face towards the fire and her thoughts wandered away to Natal. She had never seen her daughter after the latter's marriage; her husband had moved from one place to another in the Transvaal and Nance must have lost track of them, while Nance's address was unknown to her mother. Mrs. Sanders sighed deeply; she had been separated from her only child, and this separation, coupled with her husband's conduct, had made her life a joyless one.

The sound of hoofs upon the rough, half-formed road which passed within a few yards of the front of the house made both husband and wife look up quickly. The sound ceased opposite the house, and, with one accord, they went to the door and looked out.

A young fellow of about twenty years had just alighted from his horse and was making his way towards them. His left arm had apparently been hurt, for he was carrying it in a way that showed it had been injured.

"My horse is dead beat and so am I," he began in English, "and I want shelter for the night. Can you give me a bed for myself and some straw for my horse."

He glanced sharply at the couple and his face betrayed some anxiety. It was growing dark and he was unable to examine the faces before him as carefully as he wished. Had not Sanders and his wife been engrossed with other thoughts, they would have noticed the hesitation with which he made the request for shelter.

"We haven't got very comfortable quarters to offer anybody, but you're welcome to a rough bed in the loft, and there's some sort of a stable at the back that will do for your horse," returned Mrs. Sanders before her husband could speak. This young fellow was English and her heart went out to him.

"Thank you," said the newcomer heartily. He was relieved to find that he had halted at a house tenanted by one of his own people and not by a Dutchman. "I can pay for the accommodation. Will you tell me which way to lead my horse to the stable?"

"I'll show you," answered the man. And he led the way to the back of the house followed by the young fellow leading his horse.

"That's a good bit of horseflesh you've got there," remarked Sanders as they left the stable, "and you seem to have made good use of it. Been riding hard?"

"Yes. You're British, I can see, and I'll tell you all about it when we get inside. You're not the only man who has admired that horse to-day. Oh! You knocked my bad arm; I had a Boer bullet through it three days ago."

Sanders started, but his unexpected guest did not notice it. When they entered the house, the young

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fellow found that Mrs. Sanders had prepared supper of a kind and he was decidedly grateful.

"I haven't had a mouthful of anything since this time yesterday," he remarked as he seated himself at the rough wooden table, "and I'm dreadfully hungry. You must excuse me if I use my fingers now and then, as my left arm is not of much service to me just now."

"What's the matter with it?" asked Mrs. Sanders, drawing nearer to him.

"Well, I'll tell you all about it in a few words," returned her guest.

"I've been in Pretoria for a couple of months, and two or three weeks ago I heard rumours that the Boers were going to kick against British rule and set up a Republic on their own account. I kept my ears open, and then—it's a week ago—I heard that a Republic had been proclaimed. I began to look about me and to make ready for clearing out and getting back to Natal, and then I learnt that the Boers had decided to make an attack on some of our soldiers who were bringing a convoy from Lydenberg to Pretoria."

He was eating and talking at the same time, so he did not notice the glances exchanged by Sanders and his wife. After a pause he went on with his story.

"I made up my mind, to upset that little game if I could, so I got out of Pretoria and rode off to meet Colonel Anstruther and his men and warn them of the intended attack; but I reached Brunkers Spruit just as the Boers attacked 250 men of the 94th. There was a big fight and I did what I could to help the soldiers, but we were outnumbered. That's how I came to get a bullet through my arm.

"When the fight was over and I found that I could do no more good, I made a bolt for it and got away so as to take the news to Newcastle or some other place where I could warn our people of what was going on and get them to send troops to assist. I have had to keep my eyes open during those three days since the fight, and I haven't been able to come straight here. Why, only four hours ago I was chased by seven or eight Boers who took a fancy to my horse and rifle! In trying to get away from them I lost my rifle, but I managed to escape. Nearly lost my money, too."

"Money!" echoed Sanders, an evil light shining in his eyes. "And you haven't been able to take the news to—to the British yet?"

"Not yet, of course," was the reply. "I tell you, I was half afraid to stop here; I thought you were certain to be Dutch, but I thought I would trust to the chance that you would not know what was happening. But I was done up and bound to get shelter somewhere. Thank goodness you are British and I shall be safe for to-night."

"But what about your money?" asked Sanders.

"By some accident—I don't know how—I pulled out the bag containing my money which I had collected at Pretoria and dropped it on the ground. I had to pull up and jump off my horse to pick it up; I ran some risk of being shot by doing that, but I couldn't bear the thought of my hard-earned gold going into the pockets of those Boer rascals. I lost some of the coins, but that was better than losing all. They pursued me hotly after that little incident, still, I managed to leave them a long way behind."

"You have no firearms?" interrogated Mrs. Sanders; and on receiving a negative reply, she continued: "You had better take this; it is fully loaded. You don't know what dangers you may have to face, even here."

A young fellow had just alighted from his horse.

This was a six-chambered revolver which she took from a shelf and handed to the young man. He did not understand the significant ring in her voice as she uttered the last word; her husband did, however, and he shifted uneasily. Then she asked him if he could describe any members of the little band that had attacked him in the afternoon. A description of the leader was readily given, and again Mrs. Sanders glanced meaningly at her husband.

"If you don't mind," said the wounded man politely, "I should like to retire; I feel as though I wanted some sticks to prop up my eyelids."

"Come this way," said Nance's mother. She was getting on in years now, but she looked as strong and her tread was as firm as if she were at least twenty years younger. She passed into the back room followed by the fugitive, and stopped at the foot of a ladder leading to the loft.

"If I were you," she whispered close to his ear, "I would keep that revolver close at hand and try not to sleep too soundly. There is danger even here for one who has money and is trying to warn the British of the trouble that is rising in the Transvaal."

"So Dick is not out of the wood yet!" exclaimed the young fellow when he had recovered from the astonishment caused by the woman's warning. "I thought you were——"

"You get up to bed and be careful!" was all the answer vouchsafed to him

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He ascended the ladder and disappeared in the loft, while the woman returned to her husband who was standing against the fire.

"Paul Saunders," said his wife looking him fairly in the face and speaking in her usual calm manner, "you have now arrived at a point on the road of life where you have to choose one of two ways. You must either side wholly with the enemies of your country—which means becoming entirely a traitor instead of being only partly a renegade—or you must throw in your lot with your natural friends, those whom you have scorned for a score of years. I know the men who attacked that boy; so do you. We both know that they will track him to his death. And I know that he is not safe even from you! I have been patient with you through all your misdeeds; it was my duty as your wife; but if you go with the Boers, or attempt to harm that boy, I leave you!"

"Why did you give him that revolver?" Paul demanded, feebly trying to evade the issue by asking a question.

"So that he might defend himself from everyone!"

"He's safe enough. I'm going to bed." And he shuffled into the back room and undressed.

His wife went to the door, opened it, and looked out to the right and left.

The night was bleak and cold, and rain was beginning to fall; there was every appearance of a heavy storm before many hours had passed. She strained her eyes in an endeavour to see if anyone was about, but there was no sign of human life, and she returned to the room, barring the door behind her.

"If I were you I would keep that revolver close at hand."

She took down a gun from the wall and loaded it carefully; she had known what it was to be in danger of her life when she and her husband had lived for two years near the Zululand border, and she had learnt how to handle a gun; even in her present abode she had found it wise not to be without weapons and ammunition. Her task completed, she retired to rest, keeping the gun close to her hand.

The hours passed and midnight came, but Mary Saunders did not sleep; her eyes were closed and her breathing was heavy and regular, so that her husband—who also lay awake—smiled grimly as he awaited the opportune moment.

Stealthily the man sat up in bed and looked searchingly into his wife's face by the light of a feeble candle which she had left burning; then, satisfied that she was sleeping, he slipped from the bed and dressed himself.

"I'll put them on the track," he muttered to himself, "then she can't say that I did it. I can have my share of the money, and perhaps I can stick to the horse. Anyhow, if they ever came to know that I had given shelter to a man who had fought against them and was hurrying away to bring up reinforcements—if they ever came to know that I had had him here and then let him go—my life wouldn't be safe for a minute. And as to going back to Natal to be a British subject again ——." An oath finished the sentence.

He stepped softly into the front room, unbarred the door and stole out into the night. Scarcely had he left the house than his wife rose, hurriedly dressed herself and ascended the ladder.

"Wake up!" she enjoined, shaking the sleeping Dick.

In an instant he was on his feet, revolver in hand. He had not undressed, and was ready for any emergency. He levelled the revolver at the woman and asked:

"Who is it? What is the matter?"

"Your life is in danger, my boy!" she replied quickly. "You must leave the house at once: you have had a rest and your horse too, will be refreshed, so you can get away at a good rate. The men who attacked you yesterday afternoon have hunted you down, but I can guide you to another road which lies at the back of a farm and you can get away. They will never think that you have escaped in that direction. Quick, there is no time to lose."

"I don't like this running away!" exclaimed Dick. "I prefer to fight it out."

"Silly boy! What can you do against six or eight? And you have an errand to perform which is of far more importance than fighting half a dozen men. Come with me, and get away at once. This thunderstorm is in your favour."

She was right; the earth seemed to be shaken by heavy claps of thunder, while brilliant flashes of lightning illuminated the sky at intervals. The noise of the rain and the thunder would help him to get away, and though the lightning flashes might reveal his presence, yet he would be hidden for some miles by the natural unevenness of the ground from the sight of those who might be looking for him round about the house or on the main road.

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They descended into the back room and were crossing to the back door, when they heard a step in the other apartment and Paul Saunders stood facing them.

"Have you brought them here to kill this boy?"

The words came sternly from the woman's lips, as she confronted her husband with the rifle gripped firmly by both hands.

"Paul, there will come a day when you will have to answer for this to a greater power than any on earth? You will have to answer for turning traitor to your own countrymen, for killing and robbing! What will your answer be? You have not yet committed the crime of murder; stop while you are yet on the brink of it!"

A vivid flash of lightning illumined the room as she finished speaking. Paul saw the young man, his revolver tightly grasped and his face wearing a look of the greatest determination; he saw his wife, the woman who had brought him happiness in the past and had stood nobly by him despite his failings. He gazed at the figure that stood before him like a warning angel—nay, like a pitying angel who would save him from himself even now. The flash of lightning seemed like a message from Heaven from out of which came the words that would bring him to a sense of his position. For a moment a strange thrill went through him and he shook in every limb; then there came one of those strange inexplicable revulsions of feeling that send a man from one extreme to the other.

"By Heaven, they shall not have him!" The fierceness of the exclamation startled the hearers. Before they fairly realised the change that had taken place within Paul Saunders, he had rushed to the front door and barred it and was making preparations which could only mean that he intended to defend his house against all comers.

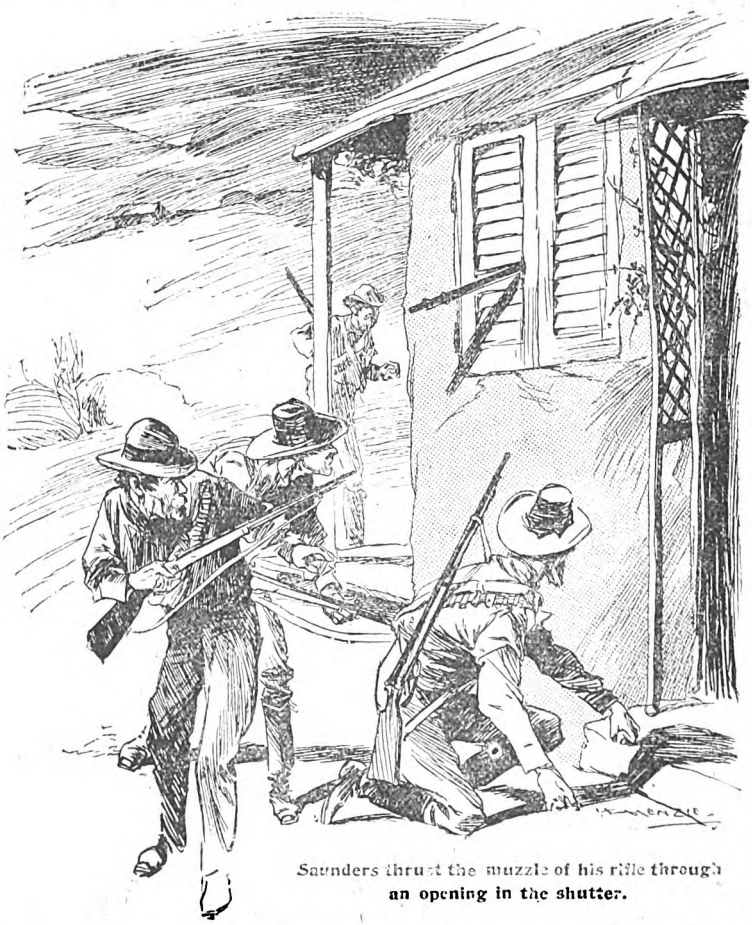
In a moment all three were busy. Not a word was spoken, but each one set to work in different ways to secure the house from attack. Then they waited for the enemy.

Half a dozen men came to the front door, expecting that it would yield to a touch; when they found that it was secured, there were loud cries to the inmates to open or take the consequences.

For an answer Saunders thrust the muzzle of his rifle through an opening in the shutter that protected the window on the inside and threatened to shoot.

Howls of rage, strengthened by oaths, followed this announcement; the Boers hesitated for a while and slunk out of range, but they were bent on getting inside and suddenly made a desperate rush at the door.

The old house was not built to withstand such treatment, and the door came off at the hinges. The next moment six or seven men rushed into the room, three or four of them firing wildly.



Saunders thrust the muzzle of his rifle through an opening in the shutter.

Two shots rang out simultaneously and two of the intruders fell to the ground. The others were daunted for a moment by this reception; they could not see well enough to find out how many were opposing them. Their rage, however, overcame their discretion and they dashed forward to the attack, using the butt ends of their rifles.

The fight was fierce, but of short duration. There were seven of the intruders in all, and the five who were uninjured precipitated themselves upon the defenders with the idea of overpowering them by the sheer force of the impact. Dick fired his revolver and dropped another man who was bearing down upon Mrs. Saunders; then he heard her fall, and he and Saunders were fighting side by side with their backs to the wall against four men. Saunders was using his rifle as a club, while Dick was defending himself with a stout piece of wood, used for barring the back door, his revolver in his left hand.

The case seemed pretty desperate, and the attacking party were evidently of that opinion, for the leader uttered a grim chuckle and urged his fellows to make short work of the man and the boy. Saunders clenched his teeth when he knew that his wife had fallen; love for his wife could hardly be said to have shown itself very prominently of late years, but, whether he cared for her or not, the thought that she had been felled

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to the ground by the men who were now doing their best to kill him, enraged him almost beyond himself.

"Come on!" he hissed between his clenched teeth. "I've a score to pay, and I mean to pay it. Stand firm, boy! See that they don't get round you, and let them know that they have men to fight, not women!"

"I'm ready!" was all that Dick replied. The sight of the woman lying still on the floor, senseless, to all appearance dead, made his blood boil.

Mary Saunders had all a woman's wit and she had played a trick that had once served her well in a struggle with Zulus; she had dropped to the ground with a purpose, and now that the four men were busy with her husband and Dick, she arose quietly, her hands tightly clenched round the barrel of the rifle.

The first intimation the invaders had of her little scheme was the felling of one of their number by a blow from the butt of the rifle. Disconcerted by this unexpected attack, the remaining three turned and retreated to the door; a shot from Dick's revolver, which, however, missed its mark, and a rush forward of the three defenders settled the question and they fled from the place pursued for some distance by Dick.

When the young man returned he found Mrs. Saunders attending to her prostrate husband—he had been wounded by a shot at the beginning of the struggle—but he had kept up until the flight of the three men, when he had fallen to the ground, weakened by loss of blood. He dragged the bodies of the wounded Boers into the back room, where several lights were now burning, and examined their wounds; two were dead, but the others were not very seriously injured, although incapacitated. While Mrs. Saunders was attending to her husband, he roughly dressed the wounds of the two assailants and then turned to his hostess to see what further was to be done.

"He is not badly hurt," replied Mary Saunders in answer to Dick's inquiry. "But we must get away from here; it will be death to us now if we remain in this house. Can you help me to inspan the waggon and put some food in it, so that we can all set out for a place of safety? I don't know where we shall go or what we shall do when we get there, for we shall have to leave everything behind us and we have no friends among the Colonists."

"If we ever get over the Natal border, you'll be all right," Dick assured her heartily. "My father is James Roberts, and if you know anything of Natal you will understand that he is somebody. And my mother will never leave off blessing you for saving her boy. Look!" he continued, drawing a portrait from an inside pocket. "This is her portrait; you can see she's a sweet woman and—Why, what on earth's the matter?"

"Is that your mother?" almost screamed the woman as she snatched the portrait from his hand. "It's Nance! Paul, Paul, this boy is our grandson! He is Nance's boy!"

* * * * *

They had not gone far on the road to Newcastle when they fell in with a friendly party that took care of Mr. and Mrs. Saunders and the waggon, while Dick Roberts pushed on ahead to take the news of the Boer Rebellion. They all reached the Natal border in safety and ere many hours had passed, Mary Saunders was clasped in her daughter's arms.

G. DAY.

NO FAITH IN THERMOMETERS.

AFTER Mrs. Willoughby had engaged her new man-about-the-house to do the heavy work and look after the furnace—for she had her house warmed with hot-water pipes—she found that it was necessary to instruct him carefully in his duties.

One of his lessons consisted in the use of the thermometer to indicate the temperature of the house. Michael knew nothing whatever about thermometers, and the instruction naturally took the form of a complete course, beginning with a description of the way in which the instrument did its work.

"You see this fine line of mercury in the glass tube, Michael?"

"Oi do, mum."

"Well, when it's warm the mercury goes up, and when it's cold the mercury goes down. Do you understand that, Michael?"

"Oi do, mum."

"Very well. Now, I want to keep the house as nearly as I can at 70 degrees, Michael."

"Sivinty degrays, is it, mum?"

"Yes, Michael. Look at this thermometer, and you will see that the mercury now just touches 65 degrees. That shows that the house is not warm enough, and you must fire up the furnace a little. Do you understand?"

"Oi do, mum."

"And if the mercury goes up to seventy-five or eighty, the house is then too warm, and you must let the fire in the furnace slacken down a little, or let some cold outside air into the house by opening the window in the hall just a little way, and being careful to close it the minute the thermometer gets down to seventy. Now, do do you think I can trust you to look after the temperature carefully?"

"The timperature, mum?"

"Yes; the heat and cold of the house, you know."

"Indade you can, mum."

Mrs. Willoughby went about her social duties, and late in the afternoon returned home. Her first look was at the thermometer. It indicated 69 degrees, and she congratulated herself that Michael was doing his work well. Michael himself had misgivings, however, not about the manner of his work, but of the reliability of the thermometer as an indicator of temperature. Mrs. Willoughby saw him go outside, and then come back and gaze at the thermometer in the hall with a troubled expression of countenance.

"Is anything the matter, Michael?" she asked.

Michael shook his head.

"Sure, mum," he replied, "it's mesilf as is afraid thim thermometers is no good."

"What makes you think that, Michael?"

"Well, mum, thot one in the hall points to sivinty, whoile the one out on the porch says only thirty-foive. Which av them am Oi to belave?"

E. T.

HE: "What are you two girls talking about?"
She: "Nothing; are your ears burning?"

A SIMPLE village worthy, of mature years, not long ago went to the village shop to buy candles, and was astonished to find that, owing to the war, "candles was riz."

"Get along," she exclaimed, indignantly. "Don't tell me they fight by candle-light!"

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My Lady's Lesson.

MISTRESS BEATRICE RITTERIL pulled up her tired and dro ping steed at an inn on the outskirts of Edinburgh. Accompanied by her servants, and with a bodyguard provided by King William, she had ridden in hot haste, with little thought to the fretting of the horses, from the court at Bristol, to meet her Jacobite lover, Richmond Dordrey.

Although she had been at much pains to obtain his pardon, which she carried in her dress, and which she had begged for on her knees from the King, yet she was unworthy of her gallant lover, who did not know her very doubtful reputation at the court. On her journey from the south she had bethought herself of a plan whereby she would make trial of Richmond's love.

Kind treatment to a horse is dear to a soldier's heart, and the lieutenant of her guard liked not this proud and haughty lady, who cruelly used her whip, and had treated him and others on the road with scant courtesy.

But, ever polite, and mindful of his duty in the King's service, he vaulted from his saddle, and throwing the reins to one of his men, assisted her to alight.

"You have my rooms ready?" she inquired of the unctuous landlord, who was bowing at the entrance of the inn.

"Aye, my lady."

The lieutenant would have mounted his horse, for he and his troop were riding on to Edinburgh, but she beckoned to him.

"I would like a word with you, lieutenant, ere you depart."

He assented, and followed her into the large parlour of the inn.

"Conduct my servants to their apartments," she said to the innkeeper. "I would speak with the officer alone."

"Sir, I would ask a favour of you." He bowed.

"Madame, 'tis the king's order, and 'tis granted," said he, curtly, for he bore her little good will.

"Nay, do not be so severe," she said, as she noticed his ungracious manner, "I like not the fashion of your answer. I want you to do this favour for me."

And Mistress Beatrice smiled at him. She could smile sweetly when she liked, and rarely could she not bring men to her feet, if she willed. The lieutenant found it hard not to smile also.

"Ah! I see you will do it," she continued coyly. "Then at nine o'clock, this evening, ride here with your men, and enter this room, as if travellers wanting refreshment. You will find me here, but pretend not to know me. After a short space, as if excited with wine, put your arm round my waist, and kiss me. There, lieutenant," and she looked shyly at him, as she dug the toe of her dainty shoe in a rut of the wooden floor, "I hope you do not find the task unpleasant."

He would have been unworthy of the traditions of the King's Guard if he had done so, for she was a very handsome woman.

"Madame, I shall be delighted to grant the favour," said he with a gallant bow, "but may I ask——"

"Ah! I see you are inquisitive," she broke in, "but more I cannot tell you."

"But doubtless, Madame, there are other persons concerned in the comedy; my position may be dangerous."

"Fie, sir! You are not afraid?"

The lieutenant put his hand on his sword-hilt, and stepped towards the door with a laugh.

"Madame, I am of the King's Bodyguard, and you know their reputation—I will be here at nine."

But a new thought seemed to strike him.

"You doubtless will pr vide a limit to the kissing," said he, "for maybe I might not be able to tell whether your reluctance was real or feigned."

She blushed at the sally.

"You may safely leave that to me," she answered, "for though my hand is small, it can hit hard."

The officer opened the door.

"Madame," said he, smiling, "at nine this even, you will see a soldier make love to a pretty lady."

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"'Tis a pretty way of putting it," she said, with a curtsey. "But lieutenant, what would you do if you saw an enemy of the King?"

"Madame, I should arrest him, or I should kill him," the soldier replied as he tapped the hilt of his sword.

"Then do not forget, for to-day, to arrest, rather than kill!"

"I will remember."

And with a graceful bow he passed out of the room, and in a few moments was riding with his troops to Edinburgh, wondering much on the strange ways of women.

"'Twill be an excellent comedy," mused Mistress Beatrice, when the lieutenant had gone. "Richmond will come, and I will pretend not to have obtained the pardon. When the soldiers arrive, he will hide—where? Ah! that curtain will do well. The lieutenant will insult me, and then if Richmond really loves me, and values me more than his life, he will come forward and be arrested—if not——" and she shrugged her pretty shoulders with a laugh, "I doubt, whether I will take the pardon back to the King."

She laid her plans carefully, arranging with the landlord that any other travellers, save the lieutenant and his troop, should be served in another room.

In the evening her lover came.

He was, in truth, a handsome gentleman, and though the watchfulness required by an outlaw had marked itself by the lines of care on his brow and his clothes were faded, yet his face was not robbed of its beauty, nor his body of its graceful bearing.

"Ah! Beatrice," he said, as he clasped her in his arms, "how I am glad to be with you. See! I have brought you a present—a spray of heliotrope; 'tis the emblem of my devotion to you. I stole them from a cottager's garden this morning—Heaven will forgive the theft."

She took the flowers from him, and slowly repeated the words, "The emblem of thy devotion to me."

But her eyes did not meet his.

She put the flowers in her bosom.

"But you are pale," said her lover. "Your sweet face had almost made me forget. Have you not got the pardon?"

"No," said Beatrice, "the King would not hear me." As she said this, the heliotrope fell unnoticed from her dress. There was silence, only broken by the sound of horses hoofs in the distance. As Beatrice heard them, she put her foot unknowingly on the fallen flowers.

"Oh, look!" said Richmond. "What a pity! you have crushed the flowers."

The horsemen had stopped in the courtyard.

Beatrice rushed to the window.

"See! they are soldiers, and and are coming this way. Quick! You must hide behind this curtain."

Dordrey obeyed. Beatrice took up a book, and, sitting at one end of the long table, began to read.

The innkeeper and the soldiers entered.

The comedy had commenced!

"Landlord, bring us wine," said the lieutenant, "and let it be your best."

Taking their seats at the table, for ten minutes or so, they drank their wine, talking among themselves, with seemingly no thought to the lady. But their leader seemed to grow merry as he drank, and eventually, filling his glass, rose from his seat.

"Come, my men," said he, "fill your glasses and let us drink the health of the King before we ride on. Perhaps madame will join us in our toast to His Majesty." And he leered at Mistress Beatrice.

"Keep your tongue civil, sir," said she, "lest I call the innkeeper."

The lieutenant seemed for the moment to take little heed to the rebuff.

"Gentlemen," continued he, "we must drink the toast alone. The health of His Majesty, King William!" And they drained their glasses.

"As the pretty lady would not drink to the king, she must pay the forfeit," smirked the lieutenant, and reeling over to Mistress Beatrice, clasped her round the waist, and played his part in the comedy by two smacking kisses.

Richmond Dordrey leapt from his hiding place, and drawing his sword, faced the lieutenant.

"Thou coward," said he, "to insult a lady, I will wipe off those kisses on my sword."

The soldiers were dumfounded, and the words "Outlaw" and "Dordrey" were on their lips.

"Richmond Dordrey, hand me your weapon," said the lieutenant, "I arrest thee in the name of King William."

"Nay! Lieutenant! There is the king's pardon!" And Mistress Beatrice flung a roll of parchment at the officer's feet.

"Richmond, be not angry with this gentleman, he did but kiss me at my request. 'Twas but to try you." And she would have flung herself on her lover's breast.

But he stepped back, avoiding her, and Beatrice, as she looked pleadingly at him, noticed that the light of love had faded from his eyes.

"Lieutenant, I crave your pardon," he said, and taking the parchment from the officer, he tore it across, and dropped the pieces on the floor.

"There, Madame, is your pardon. You may take its fragments back to the King, for I will have none of it, and I would have you learn, that a Dordrey's love needs not to be tested. Lieutenant! I am your prisoner."

And he drew his sword and offered it to the officer.

But he would not accept it.

"That is the King's pardon," and he pointed to the floor, "and now I cannot arrest thee."

Richmond, at first seemed nonplussed, but after a moment his face brightened and he turned to Mistress Beatrice.

"Madame, I accept the pardon," said he.

Then he stepped to the table, and pouring out a glass of wine, called out, in a loud and happy voice:

"Long live King James! The King across the water!" and draining the glass, smashed it on the floor.

The sword of every soldier in the room flew from its scabbard, as if from custom, as they heard the words. But the officer sheathed his again.

"Though you are a traitor to utter such, yet will I not do my duty, for I like not to have played a part in what has become a plot."

"Lieutenant, I am grateful to you," said Richmond. "Mistress Beatrice Ritteril, I loved thee as well, and as honestly as a man can, but I care not for a lady who doubts my love. I will die fighting for King James." And with these words, the outlaw passed out into the night.

The lieutenant stood still, and was silent.

The rejected lady looked ashamed, and her lips were bloodless. She had learnt a lesson.

"Will you sup with me, Lieutenant?" she said.

"Madame, unless 'tis the King's command, I would rather be excused."

Mistress Beatrice Ritteril supped alone.

FREDERICK FARRENCE.

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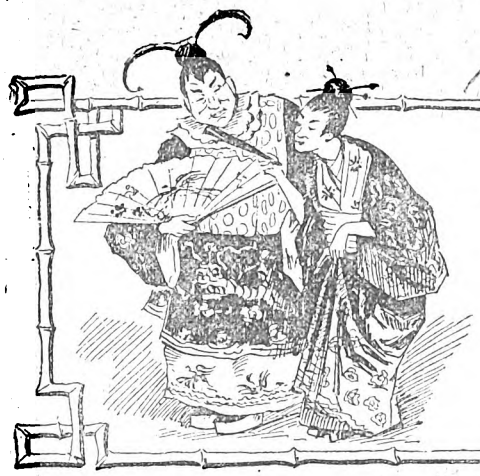

Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

VI.—HE WOULD HAVE PASSED A PLEASANT EVENING BUT FOR A BUTCHER'S BILL.

MR. BOWSER was due at home at six o'clock, and Mrs. Bowser was wondering what sort of a new fad he would bring home with him when he suddenly opened the door. As he didn't give the door a kick and a bang when he opened it, she knew that he hadn't had a row with the bus conductor *en route*. As he was humming a tune to himself, she knew that he hadn't found a pin or a shirt button on the steps and would bring no charge of reckless extravagance against her.

"Ha, little woman, but here you are!" he exclaimed as he caught sight of her. "Dinner's all ready, of course? You never keep me waiting, and you always have something good. I never come home without patting myself on the back over my good luck. Everything gone all right with you to-day?"

It wasn't an extra good dinner. The butcher had sent a poor joint, and the cook had had trouble with the fire, but as Mr. Bowser plied his knife and fork he complimented everything. He also complimented Mrs. Bowser on her personal appearance and the cook on her culinary skill. Mrs. Bowser was glad to see him in such good spirits, and yet she was uneasy. As dinner was ended she almost hoped to hear him say he was going to the club for an hour or two. He had no such idea in his head, however. As he reached the sitting room he took off his shoes, lighted a cigar and dropped into a chair with the observation:

"Ah, there's the cat!"

"Well, this is home! This is the way for a man to live! A man who has a home like this ought to be kicked for complaining about anything. Did I leave you any money this morning?"

"I—I think not," she replied.

"Then I must have forgotten it. I meant to have left you a five pound note. Just remind me of it to-morrow, will you? By George, but how neat and cosy this room looks! We might have a little more light, though."

"I'm trying to keep the gas bills down, you know."

"Never you mind the gas bills, little one," he said as he rose and lighted all the burners. "You are naturally saving, but there's no need of pinching. Just use all the gas you want to and don't be scraping with the coal. Didn't I see you fixing up an old dress the other evening?"

"I was altering it over in hopes to make it do," she explained.

"Well, throw it away and go to town and get a new one. I want to see you well dressed, and there's no need to alter old garments. Go to the best dressmaker and have the latest style."

"You are awfully kind and good!" she murmured as she forgot the peril of the situation for a moment.

"No thanks, please. You deserve all I can do for you. If there's a better little wife in all this big world, I'd like to hear of her. The trouble is that I don't half appreciate you. Only the other day I was thinking things over, and I realised to the fullest extent that but for your influence I should never have been the man I am. I've made blunders enough, Heaven knows, but if it hadn't been for you I should have made hundreds more. Just think of the tomfool fads I have indulged in, will you?"

"They weren't so very foolish," she protested.

"You say that to let me down easy, but I realise how often I have made an ass of myself. Ah, there's the cat! Kitty, kitty, kitty!"

The cat came out from under the sofa and sprang to Mr. Bowser's knees and he stroked her back and toyed with her ears and said:

"Just a cosy little family, aren't we? Do you remember that one night about two weeks ago we differed as how to spell the word 'waggon?' I said there was only one 'g' in it, and you said there were two. I want to ask your forgiveness. Of course you were right."

"There's nothing to forgive," replied Mrs. Bowser. "People are often mistaken about a word."

"But I got mad and called you an idiot. I wish some one had been at hand to kick me. About that last coal bill—I said we had burned a ton a week and jumped up

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and down, and it's a wonder you kept your temper as you did. Please forgive me for that."

"You thought you were right."

"Yes, but I made a fool of myself, as I had a hundred times before. Even if we had used a ton a week you couldn't help it. You don't make the weather. If there was ever a wife who looked after things about the house with a determination to help her husband, it is you. I don't believe sixpenny worth of stuff is wasted in a year."

"I try to do my best," she responded, but at the same time wishing that Jones or Brown would come in and interrupt the conversation.

"Do you remember the night I came home and found a pin on the doorstep?" continued Mr. Bowser, with evident enjoyment. "I rushed into the hall and made as much fuss over that little pin as if it had been a diamond spray. I stamped about and shouted and spoiled the whole evening. Mrs. Bowler, why didn't you bristle up to me and tell me to shut right up or you'd leave? If you had hit me with a crowbar that night, it would have served me right. Have you—can you ever forgive me?"

"There was a strange man here this afternoon," she said determined to break up the conversation at all hazards, "and I think he wanted to see you about land."

"Haven't I warned you a million times about this reckless extravagance."

"Well, let him come when I'm home. I believe you told me not long ago that you had saved all my old love letters. Suppose you get 'em all down, and we'll read 'em over."

"I—I don't think I could find them to-night. Shall we run into Brown's for an hour?"

"I'm too comfortable to go out. Wasn't it funny about my trying that barefoot cure? When a man starts to make a fool of himself the way I do every little while, somebody ought to take a club to him. If I bring a cricket bat home, will you whack me with it the first time I act like an idiot?"

Mrs. Bowser was about to make an excuse to leave the room when the cook came up with a bill. It was for a balance of one shilling and threepence owing the butcher.

Mr. Bowser was smiling all over as she handed it to him, but no sooner had he glanced over it than a thundercloud took the place of his smile, and he shouted:

"What's this? What's this? You've been running in debt again!"

"The butcher hadn't change of a five shilling piece," explained Mrs. Bowser.

"Debts, debts, debts!" exclaimed Mr. Bowser as he flung the cat half way across the room and jumped up and swung his arms in the air. "Woman, haven't I warned you a million times about this reckless extravagance? If I gave you five hundred pounds a week to run this house on, you'd still be in debt! Of all the extravagant, reckless spendthrifts I ever saw you are the worst!"

"But it wasn't running in debt. I had a five shilling piece, and the man hadn't enough change. I expected to pay it to-morrow."

"What's to-morrow got to do with it? I tell you not to run in debt, and you defy me. I'm looking at the principle of the thing. Mrs. Bowser, this is too much—too much!"

"You are getting excited over nothing," she replied. "We had to have meat, and the butcher boy hadn't the change."

"Wreck, ruin and the workhouse!" he groaned as he walked about. "It's no wonder I'm old and bent and grey before my time. Thousands of pins on the front steps, tons of broken dishes in the back yard—waste and extravagance everywhere! And you sit there—you sit there and smile over it! Woman, I won't stand it! I am about to retire to the library. I desire to arrange my business affairs and see if I've got a sixpence left. While I am doing so you can break up the chairs, smash the piano and kick holes in the carpet. Good night, madam!"

And when he had gone the cat came over and sat down beside Mrs. Bowser and looked up into her face and smiled with her.

M. QUAD.

Next Week: HE PREPARES A SURPRISE AND SUFFERS A DISAPPOINTMENT.

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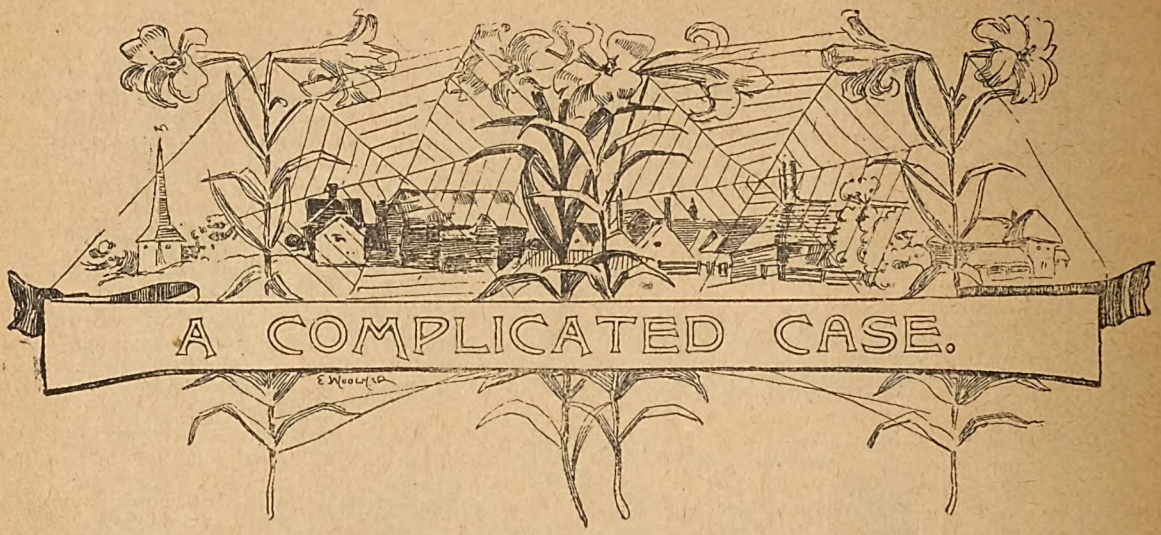

RALPH MORRISON had been running through his letters in his usual rapid and business-like manner, until the sight of an untidily addressed envelope made him give a low whistle and look decidedly blue. He read the contents, and his brow remained uncleared. The epistle sounded quite cheerful, from a client, too; he re-read it.

MY DEAR MR. MORRISON,—I want you to take up a case for me, will you? You always agree, the way people send unasked-for contributions to papers, and expect them returned, is preposterous; well now, I have mislaid two stories (quite rubbish from a beginner), and she worries my life out to return them, and at last threatens to go to law, so, for an example, I want to allow her to take up my case; you always promised to help me, and besides you procured me this position; knowing this and your kindness, I am sure you will help me.

Very sincerely yours.

EVE DICEY.

"Shall I never be able to shake her off? 'My dear Mr. Morrison; very sincerely yours,' gush! I procured her the position, I did, offices opposite; why? because I was a fool. This is a prelude, she will be here in a moment."

A word escaped Ralph Morrison, a word too shocking to print.

"It was the mildest flirtation, she was so jolly good looking, stupid, refreshingly stupid for a bit (stupidity does pall though), then she came to me to settle her affairs after her husband's death, looked so bewitching in weeds, wept, tears always melt me, thought it so safe too, a woman so cut up for her first husband couldn't be on the look-out for a second, women are so complex though one never knows. Then she was poor. Suddenly unprotected, wanting work, love was dead, she wanted work. I remember she talked much, touching all of it. Through knowing Holmes I procured her a post as editress of his latest paper, offices opposite, accidental but charming—at first."

The telephone roused him.

"Hullo, are you there?"

"Yes."

"Ralph Morrison?"

"The same. Hullo! Field, is that you?"

"I say, will you come round and dine with me to-night? The wife asked me to ring you up, quite friendly, pot luck."

"Pleasure, with you 7.30."

After this little episode, Morrison felt in a better frame of mind, he liked the daughter, Winifred Field, he liked her so much that he was half inclined to confer a great honour on her. She was not rich, but clever, pretty, bright, piquant, and had nearly as good an opinion of him, as he had of himself; in fact there was no knowing what happiness the fates had in store for Winifred Field.

"Jove! what could I have seen in Eve Dicey!"

And he settled himself down to write a polite refusal to her on account of pressure of business.

He had scarcely commenced when his office boy, with a broad but unconcealed grin, handed him a card.

"Send the lady up."

He felt anything but pleased to see Mrs. Dicey, and it was with an absence of cordiality that he shook hands and motioned her to sit down. Mrs. Dicey looked charming, she had discarded her weeds, and returned to her smiles.

"It is a year to-day," she said with apparent irreverence, but Morrison, with a glance at her toque, guessed to what she alluded. "You are busy, but I knew you would not grudge me a moment, dear Mr. Morrison."

"My dear Mrs. Dicey."

"Mrs. Dicey! Why? have I offended you?"

"Eve, my dear Eve," with a slight cough.

"That's better, you always have called me Eve, haven't you? and now, I think I might call you Ralph; I shan't though,"—an exclamation of relief from Morrison—"I shall call you Alf, I like it better."

Ralph Morrison looked decidedly uncomfortable, if Eve Dicey called him Alf, she would write to him as Alf. He had not been a solicitor all these years for nothing. He began to expostulate, but in vain.

"Now, Mr. Morrison, Alf I mean, it feels so funny at first, you are going to help me, just take up this one case for me, do, you will, of course you will."

He looked at her gravely, coldly, "Really I am"—but she smiled at him a bewitching smile, which had the same effect on him as the sun has on ice, it was in a "thaw" voice he continued, "I am so awfully"—but she detected the "thaw," and turned on that smile of

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hers, brought forth her dimples, worked the wicked little lights in her eyes, tricked her eyelashes, and played her one card beauty for all it was worth.

The ice broke.

"Well then, just this once," he said, "but you must remember, Eve, you are a business woman, and I am a business man, and——"

"Alf, this is business, and don't preach to me. I am lonely, all alone, and you are my only friend, you won't——"

Here she caught his not unwilling hand, and he, holding hers, and feeling the pulses beating violently (the effect of too tight buttons on gloves, a size too small), thought it was in connection with her heart, and that that heart was beating for him, and oh! how flattered he was.

He read the threatening note from the authoress in question, promised to look into the matter, and told Eve to find out the authoress's real name, all correspondence being signed M.N.

Ralph Morrison took some time dressing for dinner that night, he was bordering on forty, a fact he never forgot, and which made him exceedingly miserable on the night he dined with the Fields. Alas! if he had only known, it was his age in Winifred's eyes, extreme age, in which all his fascination lay. Already at nineteen, Miss Field would not look at what she termed boys. Many youths would have given their all for Ralph's extra ten years. Guy Golding, Fred Grant, Joe Harrison, and many others, spent hours in trying to add age to their youthful appearance, but their efforts were in vain, and Miss Field declared that they bored her.

Winifred Field surveyed herself in the glass with a deep sigh, nineteen years five months and one week, she looked sixteen, a fact she was quite aware of and deeply mourned. Had her mother allowed it, she would have robed herself in black, and been as grave as a judge in Ralph Morrison's presence. If she had only known, it was her youth that was the attraction.

After all it is as well to be natural, and "cease to lament." If we were able to alter our external appearance at will what surprises would be in store for our surroundings, and what failures we should make. Some of us do try sometimes, and we don't admire the result. When Mrs. Smith comes out with black hair instead of grey, some of us cut her, and the rest don't make pleasant remarks.

* * * * *

Dinner at the Fields was in full swing, everyone was in good humour, Ralph had come to the conclusion that he liked brunettes, he liked them young, he liked Miss Field, he might also have used another word beginning with the same letter, where Winifred Field was concerned. When she handed him the menu with a sweet smile, he glanced at it, and actually turned white. Surely it was not his voice that said, "Did you write this?"

"It's rather a scrawl I am afraid, and I didn't know what plum pudding and mince pies were in French, so I put them in English. Do you know?"

Silence, an awful silence, a terrible idea had come to Morrison. The letter of this morning signed M. N., and this menu, were written by the same person.

He was roused with a start at finding Winifred's large brown eyes fixed anxiously upon him and the enquiry "Is anything the matter?"

"Oh, no," with forced joviality.

"Why! how ever did you guess? How funny, and I want to ask you to do me a favour, I meant to ask you after dinner, may I?"

"Yes, certainly."

Dinner was over, the moment came. Winifred confided that she had written two little tales, she had sent them to a ladies' magazine, and could not get them back. "So knowing you would help me—you always said the law protected one's own property, and they are my own property, aren't they?—I threatened to go to law, and they've accepted. Oh! you will help me, won't you? I haven't told anyone and I'm fearfully worried, but of course you will help me. I don't want my name to come out; it needn't, need it? I called myself M. N., the catechism gave me the idea."

There were tears in her eyes, real tears, real distress. He must help her. It was all satisfactorily settled that she need not give her name, need not proceed with the case. Then the postman came, and with him came a letter from the Editress insisting on her name, and saying the matter was in her solicitor's hands.

He could not disclose his identity, and he promised to help her. Morrison left that night feeling anything but comfortable.

The next few days he tried to dissuade Eve from continuing the case, but it meant constant business interviews with him, which she liked. She pleaded example and said they had gone too far. Hearing he had not sent in his letter yet to the authoress she became impatient.

Winifred he could have easily stopped, but Eve, considering it a good joke, and knowing it cost her nothing, insisted on carrying it through.

Poor Ralph, he couldn't see it through, and lacked courage to explain—explanation to Eve might mean she would propose to him—she had already made several strides in that direction, and in common chivalry he would have to accept. Explanation to Winnie he could not face, she would lose faith in him, that would be fatal. He could plead illness till it had blown over.

No, the Fields knew his mother, would call and inquire. What should he do? He felt inclined to go away and get himself reported dead, but he pictured his mother's face on receiving condolence cards and that would never do.

Happy thought! Important business—suddenly called away. He would remain until—like all women—both had forgotten their grievances, or till Eve had found the tales and all would be peace once more. Next step where? He liked fashionable places, but dared not risk being met. Abroad! He might have to stay away some time, couldn't afford it. Happy thought No. 2! Southend, surely he would meet none of his acquaintances at Southend-on-Mud. So he packed up and went, telling his credulous mother that being a delicate sort of business for the firm, he could not give his exact address or say how long he would be away, but letters addressed to his club would reach him.

Southend out of season is moral suicide, in season (unless your taste lies in bull's-eyes, oranges, booths with

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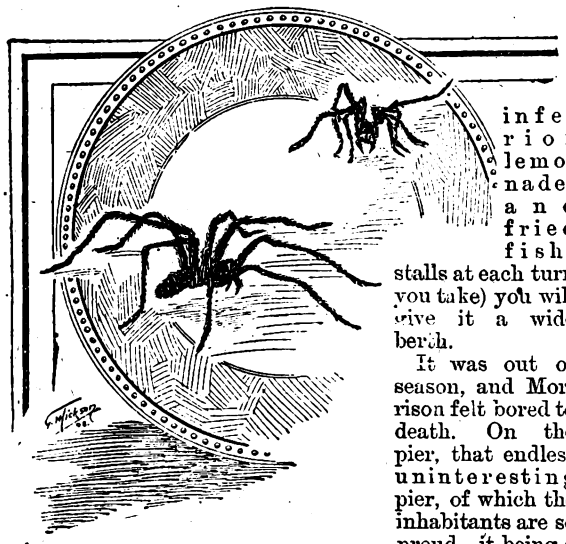

inferior lemonade, and fried fish, stalls at each turn you take) you will give it a wide berth.

It was out of season, and Morrison felt bored to death. On the pier, that endless uninteresting pier, of which the inhabitants are so proud—it being a few feet longer than any other pier—Morrison with plenty of books, papers, and cigars, spent his mornings.

One day he was aroused from his books by a clear young voice:

"Sit here, dear, it is quite sheltered," and an old lady was carefully placed next him by a young lady.

Morrison looked up, apparently wrapped in his book, and took careful notice of the younger lady. Medium height, inclined to be plain, a sweet expression, neither the style of Eve nor the style of Winnie, neither nineteen, nor thirty-six, between the two and nearer the former. He took all this in at a glance and mentally observed "quite charming."

"Now, granny, dear, I will read to you."

"What a voice," he murmured, "even makes the paper interesting."

She took not the least notice of him, but he saw all at a glance, and when he was impartial, he was not a bad judge of character.

Suddenly granny caught his eye.

"Dora, we are disturbing the gentleman with our reading, I am afraid."

Dora looked up with a scarlet blush, and Morrison took off his hat.

"Not in the least, on my honour," he said, as he saw her look of embarrassment.

Then quite naturally he fell into conversation with the old lady first. She had been sent there for her health, he learned, and her granddaughter accompanied her.

* * * * *

"It is the only sheltered seat, granny," Dora remarked next morning, "I hope it is vacant."

It was.

"I was the first to find it," soliloquised Ralph Morrison. "I wonder if it is occupied, I shouldn't mind if it were."

It was.

Friendly relations continued, and after a few days granny asked him to call on her. He was delighted, he spent some very pleasant evenings with her and her granddaughter, Miss Graham.

Old Mrs. Graham was a delightful chaperone, he played a game of picquet with her, during which Dora played and sang most delightfully; then the old lady fell asleep, music ceased, and conversation began. Mrs. Graham was a delightful sleeper whom nothing disturbed.

* * * * *

In town, Mrs. Morrison heard from her son occasionally, and greatly wondered what business detained him.

Winifred wondered, grew pale and impatient; Eve Dicey found life a blank.

One morning Miss Winifred Field, pale, and with much palpitation, drove up to Mr. Morrison's office (just off Cheapside).

Thump, thump went her heart. "If only he's in. If only he's away——"

She tremblingly walked up to the second floor, and there on a glass door was inscribed: "Morrison, Morrison, and Branscomb."

No bell, no knocker, she couldn't walk straight in, she had no pluck. No one to ask, she couldn't stay there, and she couldn't return without knowing if he were back or not. Hot and cold by turns she waited, and when she heard someone coming upstairs she looked round.

Slowly, but surely, came a tall, elegant woman in faultless attire, and made straight for the same door.

One knock, anything but timid, and not waiting an answer, she walked in. Winifred never knew how she did it, but somehow she managed to slip in too.

A clerk got up on their entry.

"Can I see Mr. Morrison?" the elegant lady asked in the most self-possessed manner.

"Take a seat, ladies, I will see."

The clerk, evidently a new one, thought they were together.

Winifred looked at her companion, thought her pretty and took heart.

"I do feel so nervous. I never had any law affairs before."

Mrs. Dicey—it was she—smiled in a superior way.

"Haven't you? I've had heaps. This one is just for fun, Mr. Morrison is a friend of mine."

"So he is of mine."

"Really! Ralph Morrison is my friend."

"So he is mine."

"A silly girl," continued Eve pleasantly, "sent me in some rubbishing little tales and——"

"I'm worried," Winifred broke in, "with a horrid editress person, who has lost some tales of mine, and for fun, just for fun, Mr. Morrison has offered to get them back for me. He says they are my property, so the law is on my side."

Eve smiled, but Miss Field was too agitated to notice it, and then the clerk entered.

"Mr. Morrison is away, Mr. Hubert Morrison will see you if you like."

"When will he return?" asked Eve as she rose to go.

"Can't say, madam."

"I will leave my card."

And once more Winifred slipped out under Mrs. Dicey's protection.

Eve turned to her abruptly.

"You write, under what name?"

"M. N." said unsuspecting Winifred.

"Shake hands, I wish you luck."

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Now Mrs. Dicey was not stupid. In this, Morrison was mistaken. She was clever enough to hide her cleverness, a trick worth knowing. She quickly grasped the position, and in a few words summed up the situation. Ralph had got interested—friendly—with her, and had promised (she had forced him) to help her. Then he had become friendly, perhaps more, with that other girl, and had in all probability offered her his assistance. Found out too late the circumstances of the case, could not assist both, and had gone away till this should blow over. "Who will win?"

Eve Dicey even went so far as to have another search for those tales signed M.N. and actually found them too, and decided that they were not to be returned till the battle had been decided.

* * * * *

It was Mrs. Morrison's at-home day. The Fields were there, also Mrs. Dicey, who by much scheming had managed to get on the old lady's visiting list.

"I have such news," said Mrs. Morrison, "My dear son Ralph is engaged to be married."

Winifred promptly dropped her tea-cup on her new dress and on the drawing room carpet. Mrs. Dicey with more worldly wisdom smilingly asked:

"To whom?"

The tea-cup episode being settled, Mrs. Morrison continued:

"He is at Sout end and there met the Grahams. Strange, old Mrs. Graham, the grandmother of my future daughter-in-law, was a school friend of mine. They are a good family and everything desirable, I could trust Ralph for that. Here is her photograph."

She passed it first to Winifred, who looked for a resemblance to herself in vain, and passed it on in silence.

Eve looked for a resemblance to herself to, also in vain.

"How handsome," she said gushingly.

"Do you think so?"

Mrs. Morrison looked surprised.

"I thought distinctly plain, a good face though, and aristocratic."

The tea-party broke up.

On the way home, Winifred, with apparent irrelevance, remarked:

"I like boys best, after all, they're easier to understand, clever people are a mistake."

"I know why he went away," said Mrs. Field severely, "he had an attraction."

She was wrong.

Eve Dicey returned to her office.

"I have been a fool, he had another attraction."

In both these remarks she was wrong.

She silently took out the two tales signed M.N. and returned them "with many thanks and apologies."

QUEENIE SICHEL.

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Black Jim, Convict.

THE man known as "Black Jim," had been sent out to the penal colony of Australia for forgery.

How they came to call him thus, I could never learn. He was not a dark faced man. On the contrary, he was light and fair-haired, and you didn't have to talk with him five minutes to realise that he had been born of gentle people and had no viciousness in his nature.

They sent him up to Woona Wally after his first two years of imprisonment, and he fell into the hands of George Stebbins.

In those days an Australian convict was bid off—that is, a settler in want of help would bid a price for so many men, and they were turned over to him for a certain length of time. He was responsible for their feed and care, and his word was law. He could work them as hard and as long as he wished. He could starve and beat them, and there was no one to come between. In case of insubordination he could shoot them down, and the government simply accepted his statement of the affair.

All convicts were glad enough to get away from prison and out upon the ranches, and in most cases they found good masters and were decently treated.

As a member of the mounted police I knew that Stebbins was a hard man to get along with.

He had been a publican and a bully in England, and his wife had committed suicide, and his two sons been taken away from him by the law on account of his tyrannical and brutal nature.

As the owner of a big sheep ranch at Woona Wally the man had a sort of standing and a few friends, but there were plenty of people who kept clear of him.

A part of the duty of the police was to keep an eye on the hired convicts in a certain district, and we thus came to know that Stebbins had less care for the men he hired than for his dogs. On two or three occasions we had been compelled to report him for excessive punishment, and the feeling between him and the police was not altogether friendly.

Black Jim came up to Woona-Wally with six other men, and the gang were locked up at the police headquarters for the night.

It fell to me to take their pedigrees and post them as to their new master and what would be expected of them.

In our district we always gave a convict a fair start. He was told what would be required of him, advised to do his best to please his master and given to understand that if he went straight we would see that he had fair usage.

I was interested in Black Jim at once.

The law had made a convict of him, but it hadn't degraded him. He had kept an honest face, a clear eye and a frank voice, and I hadn't filled out his blank when I was wondering how he could have been found guilty of crime. I detained him for a minute to ask for his story.

"I haven't any, sir," he quietly answered.

"You do not declare your innocence of the charge?"

"Of what use now that I am serving the sentence?"

I saw that he did not mean to give me any particulars and therefore pressed him no further. I had a more frank talk with him about Stebbins than with any of the others, however. I had an idea that Stebbins would be down on him from the first because of his superior plane, and I went pretty thoroughly into details. When I had finished, the prisoner said:

"I thank you, sir, and shall do my best to please."

Things came about as I feared. As Stebbins inspected his gang he picked Black Jim out for special attention. He had little to say to the others beyond making blood curdling threats of what would happen if they didn't toe the mark, but to Jim he said:

"So they have sent me a gentleman, have they? They thought I needed somebody to teach me manners, perhaps. Mebbe the idea was for you to sit on the ver nda and give me daily lessons. Well, you've come to the wrong shop. Look here, now, I'm going to keep an eye on you. You think yourself head and shoulders above the crowd, but I'll take the conceit out of you. Just give me the slightest excuse, and I'll break you in to beat the band!"

The men were set to work clearing land. At the prison Black Jim had been detailed as a "trusty" and had not come in contact with hard work.

He took his place with the gang just the same and was one of the most industrious workers among them. He knew that Stebbins was watching him and hoping for an opening, and he was determined to disappoint him.

It was two weeks before anything happened.

Then Black Jim had the misfortune to break the handle of the axe with which he was working. Stebbins at once seized upon the incident as a pretext for punishment.

We should not have known anything about it at the police station, six miles away, but for a black boy, who reported that Stebbins had one of his men hung up by the thumbs, and then I was sent over to investigate.

Black Jim had been hanging by the thumbs for two hours when I reached the place and had been unconscious for at least half of that time.

I soon had him down and being cared for, and I had it hot and heavy with Stebbins for half an hour. He contended that the man had been insubordinate and even threatened his life, and some of the convicts backed him up in hopes of making things easier for themselves, but I knew that it was a false charge. It wouldn't do to say too much to Stebbins, however. Low and com-

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cemptible as he was, he had a "pull" with the government and did not hesitate to threaten revenge on me for interfering with his discipline. Neither one of us sent in a report, but we were open enemies after that.

Not one convict in a thousand would have stood the insults and degradation put upon Black Jim during the next year. I know he tried his best, but there was no pleasing Stebbins. He was always boasting that he had a gentleman convict and that he was bound to "break" him, and he spent a good share of his time worrying the man.

It was an almost daily thing for Black Jim to be flogged, and four-fifths of his days were spent under lock and key and on a diet of bread and water. My interest in him saved him somewhat, but as weeks went by I knew what the end would be. He would either rise in his desperation and kill Stebbins or he would bolt for the bush and join a gang of rangers.

There were times when I felt vexed with him that he didn't do one or the other and show a proper spirit, although it would have been my duty to hunt him down in either case.

One day, as I was returning with the troop after hunting down a false alarm of bushrangers, my house shied and threw me almost in front of Stebbins' house, and as I struck on a stone and had several ribs broken I was carried in.

He was not glad to see me, but under the circumstances was obliged to give me a bed.

Having got settled, the police surgeon would not allow me to be moved.

The brute Stebbins wanted to show his independence of the police and persecute Black Jim at the same time, and the insults he heaped on that convict for three or four days made me itch to shoot him.

On the fourth night of my accident four men and three women arrived for an evening visit. They were about the only friends Stebbins had in a social way, and he made them very welcome. My being in the house was not permitted to interfere with the festivities.

When dinner had been finished and the drink had gone round, Stebbins sent for Black Jim and ordered him to dance for the amusement of the company. The convict respectfully but firmly refused, and his master cried out in indignation:

"You won't dance, eh? Too much of a gentleman to give us a hornpipe! Mebbe this company isn't swagger enough for the likes of a bloomin' murderer!"

"The charge against me was forgery, sir," quietly replied the man.

"I don't care what it was. You are insubordinate, and up you go by the thumbs. After hangin' till daylight, you'll probably be a little more humble."

I protested, but Stebbins persisted.

The men gave him their assistance and the women encouraged him. He had had ropes and pulleys fastened to the ceiling long before, and it wasn't five minutes before the convict was fastened up. I saw desperation in his face as they laid hands on him, but he did not resist. His arms were drawn up till his feet were clear of the floor, and, had I been able to reach a pistol I know I should have killed someone.

The man had been hanging ten minutes, and the agony had almost brought unconsciousness, when the door was kicked open and four bushrangers crowded in.

It was a complete surprise. The women screamed out and began to cry, but the men, with the exception of Stebbins, took it rather quietly.

The bully and coward went white as death and fell into a chair, and it was almost pitiful to hear him beg for his life.

He knew those bushrangers were escaped convicts, and he also knew that stories of his brutality had gone to them.

While three of the rangers covered the people with their pistols, the fourth cut Black Jim down. Then he stepped over and took a look at me and said he had heard of my accident and was sorry for it.

When Black Jim had recovered sufficiently to stand on his feet, the leader of the outlaws put a pistol in his hand, and, pointing to Stebbins said:

"Shoot him dead in his chair. He deserves mercy from no man."

Jim returned the pistol and shook his head. The next instant Stebbins toppled out of his chair with a bullet in his head, and the leader said:

"Sorry to have interrupted the festivities, but it was our calling night. We were after Stebbins alone, and the rest of you need not fear. Come, Jim, we want you."

Two of them helped the forger convict out of the house and upon a horse, and that was the making of the most notorious bushranger in all Australia. He had a career of five years and then died from a bullet, and it was two years after his death before it became publicly known that he had let the law make a convict of him in order to shield a brother.

I had always believed him innocent of the crime, and, knowing how he had been persecuted, and abused by Stebbins, I almost rejoiced when the bushrangers carried him off to make a leader of him.

C. B. LEWIS.

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Briton or Boer?

By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

INTRODUCTION.

For years past Britain and the Transvaal have been spoiling for a fight, and it was left to that well-known author, Mr. George Griffith, to write this strong and exciting serial nearly four years ago graphically describing a huge war between the two countries.

The story, coming so soon after the Jameson Raid, was read with unusual interest.

Now that Briton and Boer are in deadly conflict it will be interesting to read the story, and see how far the imagination of the author has actually come true.

CHAPTER XXXI. *(continued).*

Somewhat to Major Bryan's disgust the fight was all over when he got back, but Mafeking and Fourteen Streams and Kimberley were ahead, and he consoled himself and his dusky warriors with the promise of plenty of exciting work there.

Mafeking, lying unprotected on the open veld, surrendered promptly to superior artillery force a week later, and the Union Jack was once more hoisted on the flagstaff over the old fort in place of the rebel Vierkleur. The line south had been kept intact by the Boers for their own purposes, and so General Carrington's little army was able to make good time down to Fourteen Streams; but here his long victorious march of over a thousand miles was brought to a temporary stop.

The armoured train, which formed the advanced guard, supported by strong bodies of mounted scouts on either side of the line, reached the town on the north bank of the Vaal on the afternoon of the fourth of February to find the Vierkleur floating above it and the town and bridge in possession of a strong body of Transvaal Boers. This the General expected, as his prisoners had told him of the intended movements of the three columns.

The bridge was still intact, for the Boers had confidently expected a very different issue to the expedition to the North, otherwise they would have blown it up long ago. The question now was how to get over before it was blown up, or, better still, prevent the Boers blowing it up at all. Captain Murray, who was in command of the train, grasped the situation instanter, and knowing that he had the full confidence of his commanding officer, took the matter into his own hands and decided the question for himself.

He dropped a man to tell the scouts what he was going to do, clapped on full steam, ordered his men to the guns, and rushed at full speed through the town and across the thirteen-hundred-foot bridge, blazing away on both sides of him as fast as his guns could be loaded and fired. Once on the other side of the river he pulled up, backed to the bridge, and kept watch and ward over it. The moment anyone approached it, he took it for granted that his object was to blow it up, and a hailstorm of bullets swept across and settled the matter out of hand.

Meanwhile the scouts galloped back with the news. The British artillery train put on steam and ran up to within range of the town. Then under a heavy fire of field-pieces, Hotchkisses and Gatlings from the enemy, the guns were unloaded with admirable coolness and celerity and dragged off to some rising ground lying to the east of the line which commanded the station, town, and bridge. Here they were rapidly got into position, ammunition was brought up, and in a couple of minutes more the mélinite shells began bursting about the hastily-constructed batteries of the Boers.

Meanwhile, from the other side of the river, Captain Murray kept hammering away with his Maxim-Nordenfelt three-pounders. This kept the Boer garrison sufficiently busy until the remainder of the force had come up. By this time it was getting dusk, and the light was growing very bad for rifle shooting.

General Carrington knew that if Kimberley had not surrendered to an overwhelmingly superior force, it must at the very best be closely invested. There was not an hour to lose; the town must be taken with a rush if he hoped to get his force across the bridge, and so, while the guns were raining a storm of shot and shell and bullets upon it, he detrained his whole force and took them under cover of the artillery fire up to within charging distance.

A thousand or so of the Boers on horseback had now got out of the town and were wheeling round on the right flank. He detached a party of Bluejackets with two Maxims to occupy a little eminence to the right of the line with orders to open fire as soon as the guns were in position. The moment the Maxims spoke the Hussars, Lancers, and Cape Mounted Rifles were ordered to charge.

As they neared the line of fire the storm of bullets, which had already thrown the Boers into something like confusion, stopped, and the three troops raced away neck and neck and burst almost at the same moment, shouting and laughing and hurrahing, upon the straggling line of Boers, rolling them over, cutting them down, and riding through and through them with that irresistible impact which no troops on earth have yet been found able to withstand.

Simultaneously with the cavalry charge, the Leicestershire Regiment, the Bluejackets, a company of Cape Boys, and one of white Infantry were advancing steadily under cover of the artillery fire and the fast-growing darkness into the town. Then the bugles rang out and the artillery fire ceased, to be succeeded by the rattle of fast-succeeding volleys, mingled with the deep-toned hurrahs which told that the Briton had got within charging distance of the Boer.

Within half-an-hour the streets were cleared by the rush of the irresistible bayonets, the Vierkleur flag came down with a run, and the white flag went up in place of it.

While this was going on, Captain Murray, divining that his share of the capture of Fourteen Streams had been done had felt himself at liberty to turn his attention to a party of some five hundred Boers who had ridden out of Warrenton,

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a village to the south of the Vaal River, to learn what was going on. It didn't take him long to teach them. He ceased firing and let them come to within a hundred and fifty yards of the train in the dusk. Then he let go, and within the space of a couple of minutes all that remained of them were a few scattered horsemen galloping for their lives out of range.

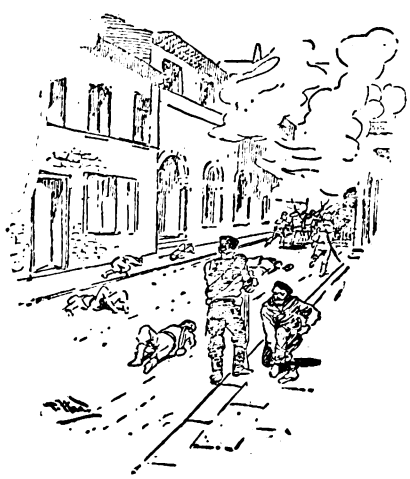
The moment the white flag had gone up General Carrington had ridden in and taken possession. The first thing he learnt was that Kimberley had been carried by storm a week before, after a desperate and heroic resistance against overwhelming odds, and that the town and district were held by a force of quite eight thousand Free State Boers, who had left half their number entrenched in it amply provided with artillery, while the rest had gone on down the line to join the Cape rebels in an assault on De Aar.

Very little thought sufficed to convince him that it would be absolutely hopeless for him to attempt to retrieve this disaster—the greatest which had as yet befallen the British arms in South Africa—with the force that he had at his disposal. To advance on Kimberley would be to court certain defeat and possible annihilation, and this was not to be thought of for a moment, for he knew how miserably inadequate the British forces in South Africa were, and rightly felt that it was his duty not to risk a single man without a definite prospect of advantage.

He found that a telegram had already been sent to Kimberly announcing the approach of a hostile force, and so he immediately supplemented this with another to the effect that the said force had been beaten off with great loss, and that all was safe, after which he sent orders to Captain Murray to destroy the telegraph station at Warrenton, and cut the wires. The next thing to do was to get his trains, artillery, and men across the bridge, and this was accomplished without opposition or difficulty.

Meanwhile he had been taking council with himself and the heads of his staff. The result of this conference was one of those bold decisions which again and again have turned the fortune of war in the face of the most adverse circumstances.

He took every horse, mule, and bullock that he could find in Fourteen Streams and Warrenton, together with every



The streets were cleared by the rush of the irresistible bayonets.

waggon and four-wheeled conveyance that he could lay his hands on, and that night made a forced march of thirty miles, of course with the assistance of his trains, down to a point on the railway about twelve miles from Kimberley and twenty-five from Boshof, the nearest town and telegraph station across the Free State border, and the only connecting link between Kimberley and the capital.

There he detrained his men and guns and stores in the grey of the early morning, loaded the latter up on the bullock and mule waggons that he had taken, inspanned his cattle, and, to the surprise and delight of his men, issued orders for an immediate march on Boshof and Bloemfontein.

CHAPTER XXXII.

How the City of Diamonds Fell.

The utterly unprotected condition of Kimberley, one of the wealthiest towns in the Empire, had long been an open scandal and a crying shame to the Cape Government and the Imperial authorities.

Although the amount of the actual wealth and property comprised within the two or three square miles on which the town and diamond mines are situated reaches the immense figure of not less than a hundred millions sterling, and although they lie but a few miles from the frontiers of two possibly hostile peoples—one of which has been turbulent and semi-rebellious ever since the British Government has protected it in the possession of its territory, and the other of which has always considered that the mines ought to be included within its own borders—it has never seemed to strike any responsible person that there is the slightest danger in leaving this precious little spot of ground at the mercy of the first enemy that might choose to attack it.

Here, as elsewhere, the scales only fell from the eyes of officialism when it was too late. As General Goodenough had informed Admiral Dale on board the *Majestic*, the great De Beers Company, which practically owns Kimberley and the surrounding neighbourhood, had faced the emergencies of the situation in a splendidly business-like fashion, and had done all that it could to atone for the criminal negligence of the authorities; and yet their best had not, in the nature of the case, amounted to very much.

The Directors had voted a war fund of a million out of their own treasury, but there was hardly anything to buy with it. Rifles, field-pieces, machine-guns, and ammunition, so sorely needed, were not to be bought at any price, simply because the Boers had been buying them up for the last twelve months. The three Maxims and two seven-pounders, which had been sent up by General Goodenough from Cape Town, with two Maxims already in the town, with a miserably insufficient supply of ammunition, formed the whole of the available artillery.

The Diamond Fields Horse and the Kimberley Rifles had been raised to their full authorised strength of four hundred each, and a civilian guard of volunteers had been enrolled and, with the greatest difficulty, armed with all kinds of rifles, mostly their own property, from combination rifle-and-shot guns to Lee-Metford sporting rifles. They numbered nearly three hundred, and this give a total force of less than eleven hundred men with two small cannon and five machine-guns to defend what is, perhaps, the most valuable tract of land for its area in the world.

The weakest point of Kimberley was its water-supply. The town lies five hundred feet above the Vaal River, from which it draws its supply and the pumping station on the river bank is seventeen miles away. To detach a portion of the miserably inadequate garrison to guard this was out of the question; to leave it unguarded meant to incur one of the greatest dangers to which the town could be exposed.

This vital point was, in fact, the first one struck at. On the night of the fifteenth of January five hundred Boers and a hundred policemen from the Potchefstroom district, with two machine-guns, under the command of Lieutenant Tossel, crossed the border, took Fourteen Streams and Warrenton, and blew up the pumping station, after which Kimberley had to depend upon the impure and sometimes half poisonous water from the mines

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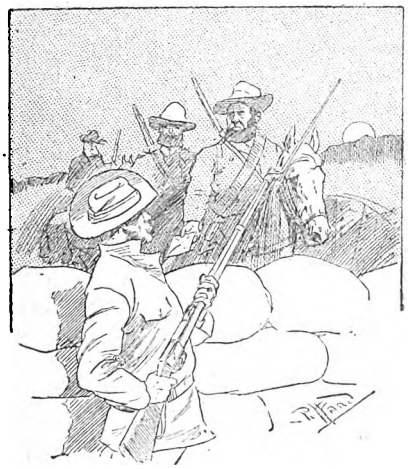
The next blow would have fallen ten days sooner than it did had it not been for the temporary failure of negotiations between the Transvaal and the Free State, in consequence, mainly, of the wholly unexpected declaration of hostilities by the Basutos. But on the night of the twenty-sixth, shortly after a telegram had come up from De Aar, warning Kimberley that the Free Staters were on the move, and informing the Mayor that, in consequence of the momentarily expected rising of the disloyal Dutch in the Cape, no further aid was to be looked for, the telegraph line was cut, the bridge at Orange River was seized, and all traffic stopped.



Their leader presented a letter from the Commandant.

This absolutely isolated Kimberley from the rest of the world, for to the westward there is nothing but the bare and limitless plains of Griqualand West stretching away to Bushmanland and the wilderness of the German territory. On all other sides were enemies thirsting for British blood and hungering for British wealth. The moment it was known that the wires were cut and the line stopped, preparations were made for the long-expected attack.

About ten o'clock at night a small party of mounted Boers, carrying a white flag of truce, rode up the old De Beers Road from the direction of Dorstfontein to a barricade which had been erected on a railway bridge, and, in answer to the challenge of the guard, their leader presented a letter which he said he had brought from the Commandant of the Free State force at Boshof, and peremptorily demanded an answer.

The letter was at once sent to the Mayor, who, with the resident directors and the Secretary of De Beers, advised by Lieutenant-Colonels C. F. B. Woollaston, of the Diamond Fields Horse, and D. Harris, of the Kimberley Rifles, constituted the Committee of Defence.

It was to the effect that three columns of three thousand men each, with artillery and machine-guns, were advancing on Kimberley from the north, south, and east, and would arrive by midnight within range of the town. If by that time Kimberley was surrendered and acceptable security given for the payment of an indemnity of three millions sterling, the town would be spared and private property respected, although it would thenceforward be considered as part of the Free State territory. Failing compliance with these two conditions, the town would be bombarded and carried by assault. This was signed "Adrian Du Plessis, Commandant of the Western Division of the Free State forces."

Such men as those who held Kimberley could only return one answer to such a message. Commandant Du Plessis was told in so many words that Kimberley was a portion of the Queen's dominions, and would remain so as long as there was a cartridge in the place or a man to fire it. After this the City of Diamonds prepared for the worst.

Scouting parties of the Diamond Fields Horse were immediately thrown out up and down the line and towards Beaconsfield and Bultfontein. These returned within an hour with the news that the Boers were massing in force all round and evidently had formidable artillery trains with them. All the women and children had been removed to Barkly West, on the north bank of the Vaal, twenty-one miles away to the north-west, during the preceding week, with the exception of the Nazareth Home sisters and about a hundred other ladies who had resolved to stay and nurse the wounded.

The tactics of the Boers in making the ultimatum expire at midnight were clearly apparent. No one knew better than they did how poor Kimberley was in men and means of defence. They knew, too, that in a town so largely constructed of wood they could soon create a potent ally who would work well for them within the line of defences.

As the clock of the Court House in Market Square struck twelve, a dozen flashes of pale flame leapt out of the darkness of the eastern horizon, followed by a roll of thunder, telling that the bombardment had begun. A dozen shells dropped and burst in as many different portions of the town. To reply to it the defenders had only two seven-pounders, which had been mounted on the high ground by the main shafts of the Kimberley and De Beers mines.

The one on the De Beers mine commenced to shell the woods of the village of Kenilworth, which the column from the Transvaal had occupied without resistance since no men could be spared to defend it, while the one on the Kimberley mine was trained on a battery which had been established to the north. This unequal artillery duel was kept up until daylight, and by that time Kimberley was blazing in a score of places while, of course, it was impossible to see what damage, if any, had been done by the defenders' two guns.

Meanwhile, under cover of the shell-fire, the three Boer columns had been closing in from the north, east, and the south, by Kenilworth, Dorstfontein, and Beaconsfield. The defenders, outnumbered nearly ten to one, had so far been able to do nothing but keep such watch as was possible on the movement of the enemy and wait for daylight. To have gone out into the darkness against a foe of immensely superior, though unknown, strength would have been to court destruction in detail, and so, ardently as they longed for a brush with the enemy, prudence forced them to keep quiet behind their barricades and entrenchments until they could use their scanty ammunition with the best effect.

Just about dawn three bodies of mounted Boers, numbering each about a thousand men, made simultaneous rushes. One came from the north by the way of the Transvaal Road, the other from Dorstfontein by the Old De Beers Road, which crosses the railway by a broad iron bridge, and the third along the line of the Beaconsfield tram-line at the end of the Du Toits Pan Road.

Attacks from these directions had been anticipated. Du Toits Pan Road and the railway bridge were strongly barricaded. In the centre of each barricade was a Maxim, and another Maxim had been planted on the big heap of *débris* in "Section 42," north-west of the Transvaal Road, and completely commanding it for a distance of some two thousand yards. The head of the Boer columns were allowed to come within three hundred yards, for the defenders knew that they had not a cartridge to waste. Then the guns spoke to such good effect that men and horses seemed to be swept away like dead flies before a broom.

Their leaders tried in vain to rally them, neither men nor horses could be persuaded to face the withering bullet-storm a second time, and the three attacks were hurled back with terrible cost to the assailants. Meanwhile, a strong column had worked round the Kimberley Depositing Floors to the north, and made a similar attempt at a rush by way of Barkly Road and Vlei Road. The seven-pounder at the head of the Kimberley rock-shaft, and the Maxim on the *débris* heap in "Section No. 6," east of Barkly Road, at once opened fire on them, and here, too, for a few minutes the carnage was terrible.

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The Boers had got in between the high fences of barbed wire which wall off the sections and depositing floors, and many of their horses, maddened by the bullet wounds, swerved up against these, lacerating themselves and their riders and throwing the whole column into confusion. The moment that each attack was repulsed by the gun-fire the retreating columns were charged by companies of the Diamond Fields Horse and the Rifles with a desperate gallantry which showed unmistakably how the fight must have gone had the forces been anything like equal.

The repulse of the four attacks, which had been meant as surprises, brought about a complete change in the tactics of the Boers. They saw that the men of Kimberley meant to keep their word, so they fell back on their batteries, of which they now had four of four guns each in position, one to the north on the *débris* heap at the extreme north of the Kimberley Depositing Floors, one under cover of the trees at Kenilworth, and two on the high ground towards Beaconsfield. In addition to these they had at least a dozen Maxims and Maxim-Nordenfelts in different positions of 'vantage with which they were able to sweep the streets from end to end.

The cannonade now began again with redoubled vigour; hundreds of seven and twelve-pound shells and torrents of Maxim bullets were poured upon the devoted town, while thousands of mounted men manœuvred all round the outskirts, keeping well out of reach and range, but ready to concentrate instantly upon any point at which the defenders might attempt to cut their way out and make a dash for the south.

Such tactics unfortunately could have but one result. The Boer supply of ammunition was practically inexhaustible, while that of the defenders was steadily approaching the vanishing point, in spite of its being used with the utmost care. Added to this, building after building was reduced to ruins by the exploding shells, and conflagration after conflagration broke out and spread from house to house with fearful rapidity.

The head-works of the mines were battered to splinters, and after four hours' continuous firing, both seven-pounders were dismounted and disabled after seventy-five rounds had been fired from each of them, and the last shell in Kimberley had been fired from the De Beers Mine against the Boer battery at Kenilworth. But so far, not a Boer had yet set

The guns spoke to good effect.

foot in Kimberley. The well-served Maxims, and the desperate valour of its handful of defenders, had put the penalty of sudden death on every attempt to do so.

In the intervals of the bombardment rush after rush had been made by the Boers, maddened as they were by the desperate resistance, and hungering for the rich booty which they believed the City of Diamonds to contain, but every one had been stopped and hurled back, first by the sweeping storms of bullets and then by the desperate charges of horse and foot.

But at last the inevitable came. The Boers saw that the Maxims were being fired more and more slowly and at shorter ranges as each succeeding rush took place. Then one by one they became silent altogether, and the exultant assailants closed in from all sides, certain that now the long coveted booty was within their grasp.

The defenders, now reduced to some six hundred smoke-grimed and weary men, nearly every one of whom was wounded, retreated, still fighting stubbornly and giving back shot for shot to the Market Place, above which the Union Jack still floated from the flagstaff on the tower of the Court House.

At length, when the Loyalists were completely hemmed in, Maxims were drawn up to the four corners of the square at the ends of Main Street, Southey Street, Knight Street, and Old De Beers Road, and the two Boer Commandants called upon Colonel Woollaston and Colonel Harris to surrender unconditionally and haul the flag down under penalty of annihilation.

They were answered in a fashion as strange as it was unexpected. The two Colonels sheathed their swords together, and the bugles sang out from the midst of the square. Instantly every rifle-butt dropped to the ground and every man stood to attention. While the Boers were wondering whether this meant surrender or the defiance of despair they felt the ground tremble under their feet. Then came a dull, rumbling roar as though from the bowels of the earth; a vast volume of mingled smoke and flame burst up from the shafts of the two great mines, followed by enormous clouds of earth and *debris*, and in the midst of the fearful din and confusion which followed Colonel Harris unhooked his sword, spurred his horse towards Commandant Du Plessis, and flung it to the earth in front of him, and shouted so that everyone around might hear:

"Now you can take Kimberley, or what's left of it, and you won't find a diamond in the place that isn't five hundred feet underground. The shafts are at your service now."

And so fell the City of Diamonds, taken at a cost of nearly three thousand lives, but only surrendered when it was a waste of worthless ruins.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE BATTLE OF BLOEMFONTEIN.

FURIOUS as the Transvaal and Free State Boers were at the outcome of the barren victory which they had bought so dearly, there was really nothing left for them to do beyond going through the formality of disarming the remnant of the defenders, hauling down the Union Jack with every manifestation of contumely which suggested itself to them, and then taking possession of the ruined town of Kimberley and the Province of Griqualand West, in the name of the two Republics.

It was in vain that they ransacked the town and its ruins from end to end in search of plunder. There was not a diamond to be found. The treasures of De Beers had vanished like so much fairy-gold. The mines were, for the time being, utterly ruined, the kaffirs had betaken themselves into the wilderness, and all that the victors could get out of their prisoners was:

"There are plenty more diamonds down there, and as you own the place now there is no objection to your digging for them."

But the Boers were not destined to have very much leisure for the pursuit of such peaceful occupation as this, for in a day or two rumours began to arrive from the north and south, telling on the one hand of victory after victory

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achieved by General Carrington and the troops which ought by this time to have been destroyed in Matabililand, and on the other of Loyalist preparations which betokened anything but speedy surrender, and of the arrival on the coast of mysterious ships laden with men and weapons and warlike stores, which came from no one knew where—all of which formed a most unpleasant and disquieting sequel to the events which had happened in Delagoa Bay and on the road from Johannesburg to Charlestown.

Then, on the top of these came the really terrible tidings that Lerothodi had fulfilled his threat; and that the Basuto warriors had poured down out of their native mountains in two streams, one upon Ladybrand and the other upon Wepener, and were converging rapidly upon Bloemfontein. These tidings, which reached Kimberley on the 1st of Februrary, caused something like a stampede among the Free State burghers, and the principal men among them flatly told Commandant Du Plessis that if he didn't lead them back to their own country they would go without him.

This produced a violent dispute between the Free State leader and Commandant Klopper, who commanded the Transvaal column. His idea was to hold Kimberley and extend southward along the line so as to get in touch with the Southern Forces of De Aar, for such a junction, once effected, would, if the Cape Boers had risen as they had promised, give them command of the railway system.

Meanwhile, there were plenty of men in the Free State to deal with the Basutos. Added to this there was Carrington to be reckoned with. The moment that he heard that Kimberley had fallen he would be sure to lead his troops to retake it, and this would necessitate holding the town with a large force.

In the end a compromise was effected. Four thousand men were left in Kimberley and along the line under Commandant Klopper, and Commandant Du Plessis led the rest of the men who were in fighting trim, to the number of some 4,500, across the Modder River, and *via* Petrusburg to Bloemfontein, where he arrived after a five days' march to find the capital of the Free State already closely infested by swarms of Basuto horsemen, who had left a wilderness of desolation behind them from the border to the line of railway, and who had only been checked in their advance by the guns of the newly-constructed forts.

The redcoats and bluejackets hauled down the Free State flag and hoisted the Union Jack.

After fighting three pitched battles against enormous odds, he succeeded on the third day after his arrival in forcing his way with little more than half his army into the beleaguered city; but before his wearied and battle-worn men had time to take the few hours' rest that they so sorely needed, they and the garrison of Bloemfontein were roused by the terrible tidings that a new army, composed of English and Zulus, or Matabeles, had suddenly appeared in the open country to the west, and were even at that moment in the act of carrying the chain of hills to the north by storm.

There could be no doubt who the new enemy was. It could only be General Carrington at the head of his victorious army from the North. He had done the very last thing that anyone would have expected him to do in leaving Kimberley for the present to its inevitable fate. He had struck out at the heart of the Free State.

The events of that night will never be forgotten as long as there is a white man in South Africa. The Boers, surrounded on all sides and bewildered by all sorts of conflicting reports, fought as men only do fight when they know that home and country are at stake. The battle raged incessantly to the east and west of the little town, which lies between a range of low hills to the north and some rising ground to the south, on which the principal fort is built. East and west the country is flat and open, and the town, save for the forts on the hills is unprotected.

General Carrington, adhering strictly to the general rule of tactics which the bitter experience of the past had shown to be most advisable in dealing with the Boers, had so timed his arrival that he was able to deliver his first assault about two hours after midnight. This rule of "night attacks and cold steel" naturally offered every advantage to the attacking force.

It completely discounted the superior shooting of the Boers, it turned to account their hatred and almost childish fear of the darkness, and, more than all, it gave a chance for the bayonets to get home.

Umzilizi and his brother Indunas, of course, knew all about the Basuto incursion, and equally, of course, they took care that Lerothodi, who was commanding his mountain warriors in person, should be duly advised of the coming of General Carrington's force.

A brief *indaba*, or conference, was held about midnight on the Brandberg, a wooded hill about seven miles to the west of Bloemfontein, and a rough plan of action decided upon.

The Basutos were entrusted with the task of keeping the plains clear and masking the advance of the British and their allies.

The General then divided his own forces into three divisions.

The left or northern wing consisted of the Matabele Legion under Major Bryan and his trusty lieutenants, and to them was entrusted the task of driving the Boers out of their positions in the northern heights, or the Bloemfontein Kopjes, as they are called. They were to be followed by an artillery train, which was to occupy the positions of advantage as they cleared them.

The right wing consisted of the men of the Leicestershire Regiment, under Captain Pearson; a detachment of Marines, under Captain Vivian; and the Naval Brigade, under Commander Morshead, of the *Magnificent*, and Lieutenant Ferris, late of the *Thrasher*. Its business was to storm the lower heights to the south of the town, and if possible, carry the fort by assault.

The centre, under the General himself, consisted of the Rhodesian forces with the York and Lancaster men under Colonel Alderson, supported on either flank by the Lancers and the Hussars.

As had been the case in Rhodesia, the tactics employed by the assailants completely mystified and ended by demoralising the Boers.

Rockets rushed up out of the darkness on all sides of the town, great globes of blue fire burst out high up in the sky, and cartridges of dynamite and mélinite came raining down on the stones of the kopjes, among which the Boers had taken up their positions, and falling into the interiors of the forts themselves.

Then, before the weird blue light disappeared a brief storm of rifle and machine-gun bullets was poured in, and then, through the sudden and utter darkness that followed came the wild yells of the Matabele Legion, the deep-toned

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hurrahs of the British and Colonials, and then the swift, irresistible rush of the pitiless steel.

As the fight went on hour after hour, the Boers, suffering under every disadvantage from the novel mode of fighting, were slowly driven from position along the two ranges of the heights, while in the plain below the British horse and foot were yard by yard driving in the defenders to the west, and to the east beyond the railway line the fiery Basutos were hurling themselves in incessant charges on the outbuildings of the station which were held by twelve hundred Boers under Commandant Klopper.

At length, just as the dawn was beginning to show over the sharp peaks of the mountains towards the Sovereignty Border, a rocket soared up from the southern heights and burst into a cloud of red sparks. At the same moment the firing to the south suddenly stopped, and was followed by a hoarse, deep, rolling sound of cheers, such as could only come from British throats. The rocket was the signal that the fort, built on the site of the old English Fort, which dated from the time of the foundation of the town, had been carried by assault.

The guns of the fort to the north, which completely command the southern heights, were immediately turned on it, and opened a heavy fire, but by this time the northern kopjes, with the sole exception of the fort, were in the possession of the British, and three batteries of twelve and seven-pounders had been got in position, completely commanding the town.

The red-coats and blue-jackets, after silencing the guns of the old fort, hauled down the Free State Flag, hoisted the Union Jack in place of it, and then promptly evacuated the works, leaving the artillerists on the opposite hill to pound them to ruins at their leisure.

Then, wheeling round the base of the fort, the blue-jackets made a brilliant charge up to the monument commemorating the last Basuto war, driving a party of Boers before them at the point of the bayonet, and planting a couple of maxims on either side of the monument, from whence they completely commanded a wide street leading down to Market Square in the centre of the town.

The sight of the British flag once more flying over the old fort damped the spirits of the defenders as much as it raised those of the assailants.

All the positions of advantage, with the exception of the north fort, were now in the hands of the British, and the town lay at the mercy of their batteries.

The losses of the defenders, mainly in consequence of the utterly strange tactics pursued by the attacking forces, had been exceedingly heavy, and the survivors were now completely hemmed in on all sides.

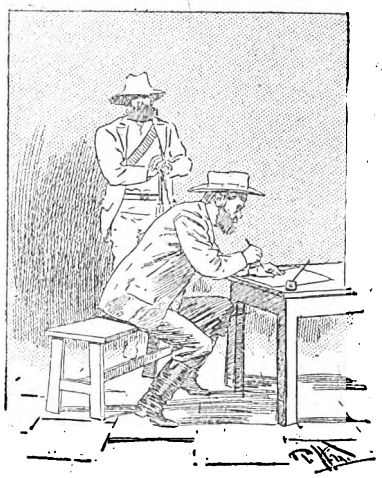
Every outlet was commanded by machine-guns or the mountain batteries, and so, shortly after six, President Steyn recognised that the end could now be but a matter of time, and, in order to save the inhabitants of the town from the horrors of a general assault, which he saw must soon be made, he hoisted the white flag over the Government Offices, and sent a messenger to General Carrington to request an armistice.

The reply was as unexpected as it was staggering. General Carrington wrote:

"I have neither authority nor inclination to treat with rebels against the Queen's authority and violaters of the Queen's dominions so long as they have arms in their hands, nor have I any intention of making the same mistake at Bloemfontein as was made at Amajuba Hill. The forts must be surrendered and all arms and ammunition given up within two hours, or the town will be carried by storm. Surrender must be unconditional but life and private property will be rigidly respected."

A meeting of the Executive had already assembled at the Government Offices, and it proceeded at once to discuss General Carrington's ultimatum, for indeed it was nothing less.

One or two were for fighting it out, but the President and the majority clearly saw the hopeless folly of further resistance. The town was surrounded, one of the forts had been taken by storm, and at any moment its guns could be turned upon the town as a prelude to the general assault. The North Fort, it was true, might hold out as long as its water and provisions lasted. It might also shell the town after the British took possession of it, but in that case they would simply evacuate it, retire out of range, and starve the place out.



President Steyn affixed his signature to the letter.

Both the railway and the telegraph were in their hands, and no news could be sent to the Transvaal or reinforcements asked for.

Meanwhile, too, the Basutos and Matabeles might break loose from control and lay the country waste far and wide, while the Commandos were in the south and west. In fact, the only chance of escaping the long-due vengeance of the Basutos lay in such control as General Carrington and the Imperial Government might be able to exercise over them.

An hour and a half was spent by the Executive in deliberation and by the British and their allies in improving and strengthening their positions, and then, with a heavy heart, and faltering hand, President Steyn affixed his signature to the letter informing General Carrington that, in the interests of humanity, it had been decided to surrender the town.

Immediately on receipt of it the General sent instructions for the burgher forces to pile their arms in the Market Place, and then march out of the town on to the open stretch of ground between the railway and the kopjes. At the same time he requested that a member of the Executive should accompany a detachment of the Imperial troops to the North Fort, and superintend its formal surrender.

An hour later the General entered the town, surrounded by his staff, riding at the head of the Imperial and Colonial troops which had won such rapid and brilliant successes, as it were out of the very hands of the Fates themselves. In front of the new Raad-Zaal the formal act of surrender took place.

The Free State flag fluttered down from the lofty flagstaff, and as the Union Jack went up to take its place the band of the Leicestershire Regiment played the first few bars of "God Save the Queen," and then the General made a brief but pregnant proclamation abrogating the Constitution of the Orange Free State, and re-asserting the Queen's authority from the Orange River to the Vaal.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CAPTAIN MURRAY'S GAME OF SPOOF.

THERE was one portion of General Carrington's force which had not the good fortune to share in the glory of the brilliantly successful attack on the capital of the Free State, although by way of compensation, the Fates, as it proved, had a very special distinction in reserve for it. This was the crew, as it may perhaps be termed, of the armoured train under the command of Captain Murray.

The gallant little Captain and his men were the only

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members of the Rhodesian force whom the orders to march on Bloemfontein did not please. When they were first communicated to him he commented briefly but pungently on them, and then, jumping out of the cab of the forward

Captain Murray hurriedly grasped the hands that were thrust out to him.

engine, he went straight to the General and remonstrated respectfully but eloquently with him, reminding him that it was a thousand pities that such a splendidly effective fighting machine as the armoured train had proved to be should have to be either destroyed or left for the enemy to take possession of.

In spite of the shortness of time at his disposal the General listened patiently to him, and then said good-humouredly:

"It's no use, Murray. I'm very sorry, and I quite see your point; but we can't relieve Kimberley, while we have a very good chance of taking Bloemfontein with a rush, simply because it is the very last place that they would dream of seeing us at, and as they haven't built the line across yet, I am afraid your train will have to be left."

This was just what Captain Murray had expected, and so he was ready with his answer.

"Yes, General, that is perfectly right, I know, but still—just think how much use that train would be to our people down at De Aar. Why, it might be the means of saving the junction—the most important one for us in all South Africa."

"Won't you let me try to rush her through, General?" he went on appealingly. "My chaps will volunteer to a man and enjoy the job. They're a hard-boiled lot, and they'll put her through or bust in the struggle. The Boers have no notion that we are here yet, for the wires are down, and we haven't left them a horse or a mule to ride. We can be through in half-an-hour if we have luck and the line's clear."

"And if it isn't?" queried the General.

"Then," said the little man, shutting his teeth with a snap, "by the Holy Smoke, I'll rush her into the station, blaze away as long as I have a cartridge left, and then dynamite the whole shoot to glory. I've two or three hundredweight of the stuff on board."

"And, by the Holy Smoke, you shall try it, Murray!" laughed the General, catching the infection of his enthusiasm. "Go ahead, and good luck to you, and if you can manage to smash the telegraph office up as you are going through by all means do it. If not, don't forget to pull up and have the wires down on the other side, or you'll have the Modder and Orange River bridges blown up to a certainty."

"Thank you, General, thank you! You needn't fear me forgetting a thing like that. I shall either be in De Aar before you are halfway to Boshof, or I shall have run the train slap into Kingdom Come."

With that Captain Murray saluted his commanding officer, hurriedly grasped half-a-dozen hands that were thrust out to him as he turned away and then went off on his desperate mission. As he had said, every man of the armoured train crew jumped at the chance of emulating the brilliant exploits of Commander Robertson and his companions, of which they had by this time received full accounts by telegraph from Salisbury and through that much more mysterious native news-agency, the secret of which no white man has ever yet solved.

If there were to be any chance at all of success it would have to depend upon a judicious mixture of strategy and dash, and Captain Murray was quite prepared to accept this condition. Three or four Transvaal flags had been captured at Fourteen Streams and Warrenton, and he had very little difficulty in getting possession of these. Then, somewhat to the surprise of his men, he proceeded to decorate the forward engine with them.

"You see," he said, in answer to the wondering remonstrance of one of his lieutenants, "we've sent the beggars a message to say that we've been thrashed, and as they know we had the train they'll be expecting their chaps to bring it along. They can see it coming a long way from Kimberley station, and when they see the flags, of course, they'll run away with the idea that this is the captured train, so they'll have the station clear for us to run into, and then—well, you just wait and see. I'm going to teach them a little quiet game of spoof."

The explanation was perfectly satisfactory, and of their own accord those of the men who were wearing uniforms took off their coats, pulled the red and blue puggarees off their hats, unfastened the left flaps of the brims from the crown, slouched them down and generally made themselves look as much like Boers as possible.

Meanwhile, the two engines had been getting up a full head of steam, and within a few minutes all was ready to start. Then the crew clambered on board, the guns were loaded, ammunition was placed ready for instant use, rifles were looked to, and fuses were attached to a score of parcels of dynamite, each weighing about ten pounds. Then the order to go was given, and the train, with its freight of potential death and destruction, slowly gathered away, and was soon spinning easily along at about five-and-twenty miles an hour.

At this speed a few minutes brought it within sight of Kimberley, and the light was now strong enough to enable Captain Murray, through his glasses, to see the ruin that had fallen upon the lately prosperous town. He also saw that there was a train standing in the station. He gritted his teeth and said:

"Well! the beggars have played the very mischief with Diamondopolis and no mistake, and if they don't get that train out of the way there'll be a smash."

Then with the insolent assurance which generally commands success, he put his hand on the whistle-tap and sent a succession of hideous shrieks from the steam syren screaming through the still morning air. This instantly brought a dozen or so field-glasses to bear on the approaching train from the station, in which a detachment of Boers was being embarked for the South. Those who held them saw the engine decked with Transvaal colours, and immediately fell into the trap that the Captain had laid for them.

The train in the station began to slowly pull out on to the siding. But a moment or two made it apparent that unless the armoured train slowed down, there would be a smash which would probably mean disaster, since the points would necessarily be against it. Captain Murray therefore gave the order to down breaks, and at the same time told his men to sit tight and be ready. This was taken by the Boers to mean that the supposed captor of the armoured train wished to run it alongside the platform, and so the other train was moved off and the points set back and the line left clear for it to come in.

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"Now's our time," said the Captain to his engineer. "It's now or never. Off brakes and let her go for all she's worth."

The syren screamed again, the train moved forward, increasing its speed with every yard, and, to the amazement of the Boers, who expected it to slow down again and stop, it came thundering into the station at something like thirty miles an hour. It was in and out again before they awoke to the disgusting conviction that exactly the same trick had been played upon them as had been played at Standerton.

But they speedily became aware of another matter, which claimed their more immediate attention, for, fast as the train had gone through the station, it had left something behind it, and that consisted of a score or so of oblong wooden boxes with burning fuses attached to them, which had been quietly dropped overboard, and were lying along the line and under the platform.

Instantly a shout of "Dynamite!" was raised, and there was a general stampede, in the hurry of which everyone naturally thought of nothing but his own safety. This, no less than the blowing up of the station, which in a few moments was only a heap of shapeless, burning ruins, was exactly the effect that Captain Murray had intended to produce.

A few words flashed down the wire from Kimberley to Modder or Orange River meant the destruction of the bridge, and irretrievable disaster; but by the time the panic had abated, and someone thought of the telegraph, he had stopped his train a couple of miles on the other side of Beaconsfield, cut the wires, and pulled up half-a-dozen rails, which he thoughtfully took away with him, in case they might be put to an undesirable use. Then the train, with its forward engine still decked with the rebel flags, got up speed again and ran the remaining twenty-three miles to Modder River in a little under the hour.

The town was occupied by a small force of Free State Boers, but as these had no notion of what had happened at Kimberley, they allowed it to run through the station and clear the bridge, not only without opposition, but accompanied by the cheers of those who saw it. Thirty-two miles further on it pulled up at Belmont Station, a place of no strategic importance, which had been left unprotected, and was therefore taken possession of. Here the wires were cut and a few rails taken up while the engines were being re-coaled and watered.

There was a general stampede.

Twenty-one miles further on the train rushed at full speed through Orange River and cleared the great bridge without a hitch, and entered upon the last stretch of its so far prosperous run. Of course the wires were, as usual, cut immediately the train was out of sight of the town.

Captain Murray had some idea of blowing up the great bridge behind him, but as it would take several weeks to repair it, and as it might be wanted for the British advance to the North, he decided to leave it standing. He also thought of telegraphing on to De Aar from one of the wayside stations to say he was coming, but here again second thoughts warned him that it was quite possible that the rebel Boers of the Cape might have by this time risen in force and captured the junction, so he kept up an easy speed of five-and-twenty miles an hour, and decided to be his own news-bearer.

A run of eighty minutes brought him within sight of the junction, and convinced him that in this case certainly second thoughts had been best. Before the train came in sight of the station the sound of heavy firing began to roll up the line, and as his engine swung into view and he got his glasses to bear on the station he saw that a big fight was in progress, or rather just about to be decided.

The Loyalist garrison had, in fact, been attacked that morning by a force of between four and five thousand rebels, and, after a desperate resistance of nearly five hours, was being driven out of the town and station and along the line to Naauwpoort, where, at Hanover, some twenty-five miles further on, another large force of rebels had occupied the hills on either side of the railway.

The situation of the defeated garrison was therefore a desperate one. All the country to the south was up in arms. The passes of the Sneeuwberg were held by the rebels. To the east they had joined hands with the Free Staters over the border, and the fall of Kimberley had closed the way to the North.

As the train hove in sight, the Loyalists, to the number of about two thousand, were retreating, fighting in good order, and apparently with the object of taking up a position in the hill to the south-east.

A heavy column of Boers was just crossing the line to execute a flanking movement. When they saw the flags on the engine they welcomed it as an ally with loud shouts of triumph. But a few moments changed these to cries of very different import, for the train, instead of slowing up as it approached the station, increased its speed with every yard, and before they had time to get clear of the rails, it had rushed through the centre of the Boer column, sweeping a score or so of men up on the cow-catcher, and hurling their mangled bodies to right and left.

Then, through the cries and shrieks of agony and the shouts of rage and astonishment, there burst the dull, thudding roar of the Maxims, and the sharp bang—bang—bang of the Nordenfeldt quick-firers.

"Let 'em have it, boys! Give 'em beans before they can run!" shouted Captain Murray, as he shut off steam, and ran up to the Maxim that was mounted on the tender of his engine.

For the next few minutes the scene was one that would have beggared all description. Clouds of smoke and streams of flame poured out from end to end of the armoured train, and ahead and in the rear, and to right and left, a hurricane of machine-gun and rifle-bullets, and two-pound shells from the Nordenfeldts, was poured upon the astounded and demoralised victors of a few minutes before.

The Loyalists, seeing that, for the time at least, deliverance had come, faced round and added their rifle-fire to that of the train, and for the few moments that the paralysis of panic lasted the carnage was appalling.

The Boers, not knowing for the moment what to do, demoralised and disorganised, were mown down in hundreds by the sweeping fire of the guns and the deadly volleys of rifle-fire from the Loyalists.

Then there came a wild stampede of panic-stricken men and horses, maddened by terror and the torture of bullet wounds, and the rebel commando, caught and overwhelmed in the very moment of victory became a scattering rabble, riding or running for dear life to escape the pitiless hurricane of lead and iron which incessantly swept the thickly-strewn field of death.

(To be continued.)

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "Rev. Annabel Lee," by Robert Buchanan, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. E. Chance, c.o. Mr. B. Dalton, Maltravers Street, Arundel. Attempts for this week's prize may deal with ANY SUBJECT and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, May 21st. Post-cards only, please.

In Instalments.

A SMALL boy, returning home from school for the holidays, had occasion to take a cab between two railway-stations in London.

Having paid his fare, the following conversation took place:

"I'd like a bit for myself, sir," cabby whined, "just to drink your health. Holiday-time, you know, sir."

Small Boy: "Oh, yes! How much will that take? Half-a-sovereign do it?"

"Thank you kindly, sir, and bless you!"

"Quite welcome, cabby. Here's the first instalment."

And the small boy handed him twopence.

E. C.

He Knew the Sort.

A LADY was driving her husband down a narrow lane, when, turning a sharp corner, they encountered a brewer's van. There was no room to pass, and the lady said very tartly:

"You must go back, for I shall not. You ought to have seen us before entering the lane."

"But, my dear," said the husband mildly, "the man couldn't see round the corner."

"I don't care," was the characteristic reply. "I'll sit here till doomsday before I give way to that man."

The carter, who had overheard the colloquy, here remarked:

"A' richt, maister, I'll back oot; I've got sic anither at hame."

A. H.

Golf à la Kaffir.

AN intelligent Hindoo has been heard to define billiards as a game in which two men, armed with long sticks, poke at a ball, while one player says: "Oh!" and the other "Hard lines."

Golf seems to have similarly impressed the native South African mind. A Kaffir warrior was observed attentively watching the efforts of certain unskilful players to extract their ball from one of those deep bunkers which greatly abound on African courses. The following day this same Kaffir was seen to be belabouring a great boulder with a huge pole, and shouting "Hang it!" the while.

"This white man's game," said the dusky child of nature. "Welly good game white man's game."

The story has the merit of being true. All golf stories are.

H. D.

Paddy in a Fix.

REGARDING the Queen's visit recently to the wounded soldiers in hospital there is a story told which is an uncommonly good one.

There was a big Irishman who had a great dread that the Royal visitor might address him, and, consequently, the event made him extremely nervous. As it happened Her Majesty did address him, her question being as to how long he had been in the service.

The poor fellow managed to gurgle out "Fiftane years, Miss!"

It is believed that the Queen smiled—sympathetically.

E. D.

Easily Rectified.

SOME years ago a gentleman was travelling through the West of Ireland, where the railway system was none of the best. Upon one occasion, he was surprised to find the train come to a standstill at a point where there was no appearance of a station.

Putting his head out of the carriage window to ascertain the cause of the stoppage, he observed the guard walking leisurely down the line.

"Anything wrong?" he inquired of the guard, with an anxious face.

"Oh, nothing much, your honour!" replied the latter reassuringly, "only the signal was against us; but I just put it right, an' we'll be off ag'in directly."

D. R.

What He Said.

A DOTING mother recently brought her only child, a spoiled damsel of five summers, to a photographer to have her picture taken. Her little ladyship, however, could not be induced to sit still for two consecutive seconds. The photographer was as suave as he could be, and tried every device of gentle persuasion to make the little wriggler keep still, but all in vain. Finally he said to the despairing mother:

"Madam, if you leave the dear little pet alone with me for a few minutes I think I can succeed."

The mother had scarcely withdrawn when she was summoned back by the triumphant photographer, who joyfully said all was satisfactory.

When they reached home the mother asked:

"Alice, what did the man say to you when I left you alone with him?"

"He thaid," lisped Alice, "thit thtill you thpoiled little rathcal, or I'll thake the head off you."

S. M.

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For the Good of the Public.

The bankruptcy courts can boast some delightfully naïve rejoinders. "How, sir, is it possible," angrily demanded the opposing counsel of the bankrupt, "to live in the luxurious style you have affected on two hundred pounds a year?"

The witness replied with an air of justifiable pride that that "was a problem to which he had devoted a considerable time in the interests of social economy, and the results of his humble efforts were now before the court." C. L.

Utilising the Tombstones.

Not long ago a cottager in a village in Kyle applied to the landlord to have a new hearthstone. The landlord declined to give him one, but told him there were a lot of old gravestones piled up in the churchyard, and that he ought to go and take one of those.

A few days after he called on the cottager, and found that he had taken the hint, and also the gravestone; but that he had put it down with the lettering uppermost.

"Why did you put it down that way?" he asked rather angrily.

"Oh!" was the reply, "it does fine to teach the bairns the alphabet." S. K.

A Ghost that Felt Cold.

A young lady arrived late one night on a visit to a friend. She awoke in the darkness to find a white figure at the foot of the bed. While she watched, the counterpane was suddenly whisked off, and the apparition vanished.

After an anxious, not to say chilly, night, the visitor went down with little appetite for breakfast. At the table she was introduced to a gentleman, a very old friend of the family, who had, she learnt, also been sleeping in the house. He complained of the cold.

"I hope you will excuse me," he said to his hostess, "but I found it so cold during the night that, knowing the room next to mine was unoccupied, I took the liberty of going in and carrying off some of the bed-clothes to supplement my own."

The room, as it happened, was not unoccupied; but he never learnt the mistake. F. S.

She Was Not a Doctor.

Not long ago a good joke was played on a young medical man in a town in Scotland—which had the effect of recalling him to the fact that the healing of the sick should be his first care. For a time the medico fairly divided his time and attention between his lady-love and his patients.

Latterly, however, the patients have felt themselves neglected, the lady-love, who lives in the neighbourhood, monopolising the doctor's attention, and when a call was made at the surgery, the young man was generally to be found at the home of his inamorata.

So, in the dead of night some waggish folk removed the name-plate from the surgery door and screwed it on to the front gate of the lady's residence.

It is not said whether the doctor relished the little joke, but there is a marked improvement in his attendance to patients since the occurrence. M. C.

She Felt the Importance.

Some time ago a worthy farmer and his wife had a visit from their minister, who was asked to stop to tea.

Their servant, Mary, who is a Highland lass, had newly come from that locality, and her mistress put her in charge of getting the bread-and-butter ready for tea.

Mary, thinking the minister's visit was of unusual importance, came and whispered in the guid-wife's ear:

"Will I butter the bread on baith sides?" F. Q.

He Pulled the Tooth.

The sight of a row of forceps has closed the mouths of many sufferers, even after they had seated themselves in the dentist's chair. Dental surgeons anticipate this, and the following amusing instance of how an obstinate Irishman was made to show his teeth may not be amiss.

Pat came to his office with his jaw very much swollen from a tooth he desired to have pulled. But when the suffering son of Erin got into the dentist's chair and saw the gleaming pair of forceps approaching his face, he positively refused to open his mouth.

The dentist quietly told his office boy to prick his patient with a pin, and when Pat opened his mouth to yell the dentist seized his tooth and out it came.

"It didn't hurt as much as you expected it would, did it?" the dentist asked, smiling.

"Well, no," replied Pat, hesitatingly, as if doubting the truthfulness of his admission. "But," he added, placing his hand on the spot where the boy pricked him with the pin, "begorra, little did I think the roots would reach down like that." E. W.

Special Irish.

A young Irish recruit was recently outside the guard-room of the barracks, one of his duties being to strike the hours on the gong suspended near the sentry-box.

"Bedad, it's twelve o'clock," exclaimed Pat, as the barrack clock announced that hour. Then, with the mallet provided for that purpose, he administered twelve vigorous strokes on the gong.

"Sure, now, I believe it was eleven I sthruck ather all," he muttered a moment later. "Faith, I'll put it right, anyway." So saying, he brought the mallet down on the gong again with the energy of a Hercules.

"What in the name of wonder are you doing?" exclaimed the sergeant of the guard, rushing precipitately from the guard-room. "Don't you know you've struck thirteen instead of twelve?"

"Be the powers, did I, now?" cried Pat, scratching his head ruefully. Then suddenly his face brightened, and, going to the other side of the gong, he dealt it one mighty blow that reverberated through the length and breadth of the barracks.

"Now, what's that for?" demanded the astonished sergeant.

"Whist! whist!" replied Pat, with a grin of infinite satisfaction. "I've bin takin' the odd number off!" W. E. B.

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Why Not Tell Mamma?

My Louis XVI. chiffonier is a very handsome and graceful piece of furniture. It is inlaid and polished, with locks of burnished copper, and always seems to be smiling as if its red and white mosaics were merry, rosy lips.

It was given to me by my grandmother, who inherited it from her grandfather, and I verily believe that it once stood in a boudoir of the palace of Marly.

Never was an innocent little piece of furniture abused and rated so mercilessly as my chiffonier was when I chanced to think of it one day during my sojourn at the Piræus, in Greece.

You will no doubt ask why I thrust my trembling hand through my hair and cried out, "Miserable idiot!" without stating whether the epithet was applied to myself or to my chiffonier.

Good heavens! The wonder was that I left a single hair on my head!

I had been so fortunate—some time before—as to be loved by the most charming of women. I shall not attempt to describe her, not even by the colour of her hair; it is sufficient to say that for two years I called her "my angel" and "bright image of my dreams."

At the end of that period, I allowed one of my friends to say to me, in speaking of her:

"How could you be such a fool?"

She sent me back my letters, and I neglected to return hers, but put the whole lot into the drawer of my old chiffonier, without thinking to turn the key.

The chiffonier was in my room; my room was in my mother's chateau; my mother's chateau was 800 leagues away, in the middle of Provence. In setting off unexpectedly on a diplomatic mission, I had completely forgotten to destroy those remains of an attachment which had been delightful—so long as it lasted.

When I accidentally called out the memory of those letters from some obscure corner of my brain I started up in surprise and shame, for I knew that my thoughtlessness might seriously compromise a woman who had done nothing to deserve such treatment at my hands.

I felt that my conduct had been unworthy of a gentleman, and in a fine frenzy I rushed out of the house, inquired for the first steamship bound for Marseilles, took passage, and, listening to nothing but the voice of my conscience, returned to France.

A week later I arrived at the maternal abode, and I will spare you a recital of the ejaculations, the "What, you, George, so soon?" which greeted me as soon as I appeared.

My mother nearly stifled me with her embrace, and was sure that something dreadful had happened to me, and I had great difficulty in reassuring her. When she had grown calm, I said, in as different a tone as possible:

"Will you have my bags sent to my room, mother dear?"

"Certainly, my son; you must be tired out," she answered. Then summoning a servant, she said: "Take my son's baggage to the blue room, Pierre."

"You mean the green room," I added.

"No, the blue room," persisted my mother.

"But the green room is my room."

"It was yours once, George," she said, smilingly.

"And whose is it now?" I asked, in surprise, and my mother pointed to the door, saying merrily:

"Here comes the present occupant."

"Gabrielle!" I cried, going to meet my cousin, the loveliest and most charming of girls, with abundant blonde hair, eyes as blue as heaven, a smile of childish innocence, and teeth like pearls.

Unfortunate, thrice unfortunate man that I was!

Gabrielle—gay, artless, and confiding, though a trifle shy—gave me her hand demurely, as she said:

"How do you do, Cousin George?"

My face must have betrayed my confusion as I took her hand, and looked searchingly for some sign of dissimulation in her soft eyes.

Had she found the letters, had she read them?

To tell the truth Mme. Blanc had loved me ardently, and had been so impudent as to express her sentiments in writing, ranging the gamut of ohs and ahs, with plentiful exclamation points attached thereto.

And suppose little Gabrielle had read them—I blushed at the thought.

But quite calmly she said: "How do you do, Cousin George?"—that was all, and in my great palm lay a soft, but cool, maidenly little hand.

Ah, but what abyss is deeper than a woman's heart, as the palmist says. Suppose she had read the letters!

The only way to make sure was to go into the room and look for them.

Gabrielle's room! What sweet melody in the words, yet I felt that I dared not enter that sanctuary, although I had known my cousin since she was a child.

"Come, George, and see how prettily I have arranged your room," she said, suddenly.

Joy, bliss, ecstasy filled me as she spoke; I was saved. Innocence had come to the rescue of depravity!

Lightly and gracefully she ran up the staircase; what a pretty figure she had. I followed her like a culprit, feeling almost afraid to go, but yet I must at all hazards get my letters.

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My former room was perfectly charming, decked out in blue and white, and with no odour of cigars anywhere. The little bed was modestly draped with snowy curtains which looked like the wings of guardian angels. I looked around anxiously for the old chiffonier; there it stood as usual.

"May I have some water, Gabrielle? I am dying of thirst," I said.

She took up the carafe, but I, artful demon, had already observed that it was empty.

"Wait a minute. I will get you some," she said, and left the room.

I rushed to the chiffonier and opened the drawer—horror! it was empty!

The next instant my cousin returned, gave me a glass of water, then showed me her album, and we talked merrily, just as we used to do when we were playfellows.

But where were my letters? Had she found them and hidden them away, or had she burned them? My head seemed to swim as I wondered.

As soon as I could think of a pretext, I left Gabrielle, and in the passage I met my aunt, her mother. She greeted me joyfully, then shook her finger at me in a mysterious way, and with a very knowing air, whispered:

"Come with me, you naughty, careless boy."

I followed her into her own room, where she opened a drawer, saying meanwhile:

"When we first arrived here it fortunately occurred to me that before putting a young lady into a bachelor's room, it would be well for me to look about a little. I have had some experience of young men and their ways."

Here she put a package into my hand. Heavens and earth!—my letters.

I threw my arms around my aunt's neck, kissed her rapturously, and confessed everything.

A week passed. One morning, when I got up, I found a tiny piece of paper on the floor, as if it had been slipped under the door. I picked it up, it was a letter.

"What does this mean?" I thought, and then unfolded it and read:

DEAR COUSIN,—Why do you not tell mamma all about it?

"All about it?" What does she mean? Dear cousin, it is from Gabrielle!

I did not understand it at all, and waited anxiously for the breakfast hour. When I heard my cousin go down-stairs, I darted out and was going to speak to her, but she blushed, turned her face away, and putting a piece of paper into my hand, said, hurriedly:

"Take back your letter and speak to mamma."

My letter! I rushed out into the garden and read the missive. Thunder and lightning! it was my writing, my style, my name.

You are adorable, therefore I adore you. Will you listen to me? Will you let me devote my life to you? A word from you and I throw myself at your feet. GEORGE.

It was, indeed, my letter. It was number one of my effusions to the ex-queen of my heart. It had slipped out of the package of letters, and Gabrielle, finding it in the chiffonier, thought that I had placed it there for her, and her answer was: "Speak to mamma." The result of the accident was I spoke to "mamma," and I married Gabrielle; I adore her, and am the happiest husband in the world.

A. LITTLE.

NO ONE KNOWS

When the War Will End, But——

£250 will be given to the reader of PEARSON'S WEEKLY from whom we receive a Coupon bearing the exact date upon which the

BRITISH FLAG WILL BE OFFICIALLY HOISTED IN PRETORIA.

ALL YOU HAVE TO DO.

Fill in the coupon below.
Send it in to us as soon as you like.
Send as many coupons as you like.

If two competitors name the exact day the money will go to the one who gives the correct hour of that day. If two or more give the correct day and hour the £250 in full will go to him whose coupon we received bearing the earliest date of sending in. Pretoria time, which is about an hour and three quarters in advance of English time, must be stated.

The Editor's decision must be final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding.

The Editor reserves the right to close this competition at a day's notice.

Address all envelopes to "War Editor," Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Pretoria Coupon, S.S.] *May 19, 1900.*

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Day..... *Hour*.....

(Pretoria Time.)

We shall take it that competitors mean the year 1900 unless they state otherwise.

This notice and coupon also appears every week in the ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY NEWS, HOME NOTES, THE SUNDAY READER, PEARSON'S WEEKLY, and the BIG BUDGET.

Readers of SHORT STORIES may enter with this Coupon.

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THE CONVERSION OF NICOLA.

In Jaupierre, which takes its name from the sand-stone quarries embedded in the sloping sides of a little valley by the Moselle, the dust rose in golden clouds from the yellow highway. In the shade of the whitewashed wall before the roomy inn, squatted the musicians, and upon the broad, smooth road—the only bit of ground left uncultivated by the hard-working people—gay, active girls and roguish-eyed boys were dancing a quadrille, forward and back to the quickest time. There was no calling-off, no confusion; no hesitating, uncertain couple spoiled the dance. It was like watching a well-drilled ballet-intertwining figures, gay, fluttering gowns, and supple bodies, bowing and balancing. And upon them all laughed the glowing October sun, the orchards sent out fragrance, and the fine, yellow dust covered the whole landscape with a glittering veil.

Jaupierre was celebrating, for it was the beginning of the village festival in honour of that good saint who, all the year through, takes such good care of the whole village. In every house work was laid aside. The young people hurried to the dance; the old people looked on, or rested at home from the many cares that come with the wine-making and the fruit-gathering.

The blacksmith's house stood in the midst of the village, but the doors and windows were closed and the anvil was silent, for "the Marshall" had wandered out with his wife and daughter into what was, at that time, the Frenchman's paradise—a bare sunny spot outside the town with dusty fruit trees and big vegetable beds; this spot the Frenchman loved to call his "garden."

Upon a rickety bench without a back, in front of a wooden hut for the garden tools, sat "Monsieur," and studied "Little Lorraine," with suppressed invectives against the "cursed Prussians," Madame had enthroned herself upon an overturned oleander tub in the path, and had made fast to the trunk of a young apple tree that netting work, which for some unaccountable reason the women of that province are always doing.

Meanwhile Celestine, the dark-eyed daughter, leaned sulkily against the hedge and picked to pieces the bunch of asters and mignonette which had been stuck into her pretty pink silk sash for a gala decoration. She started nervously when the priest reading his breviary as he strolled along, gave her a friendly greeting, after he had inquiringly scanned her face usually so gay

"Oh, Celeste!" cried the jovial priest, nodding to her, "not at the dance? What is the matter?"

"None of your business!" Celestine would have enjoyed saying, but she held her tongue, while her blushing face drooped before the keeper of her conscience.

"Really, you must confide in St. Joseph," continued the priest laughingly, as he courteously declined Father Audebert's invitation to join them; he thanked Madame for the "Mirabelles de Mez," the little sugary plums she had given him, and said good-bye to the good people for the present.

Without stopping he kept on his way, for his sharp, clever eyes had discovered something toward which he eagerly turned.

But this something—a slim, shock-headed lad—at once disappeared behind a beech thicket toward a foot-path by the side of the road.

"Hello, Nicola!" called the priest, "why are you slinking through the meadow there, and keeping Celeste waiting? Surely you ought to take her to the dance!"

Nicola looked very much ashamed and slowly turned around; but when the priest, still diligently reading in his book, had passed by and disappeared behind a second clump of bushes as he followed the path onward, the lad stood for a time undecided, lazily stretched himself, finally turned back again, and slowly, as before, sauntered along the woody path, sweet with thyme, humming this witty and beautiful song:

Had the good God willed,
My name had been Jerome;
But it seemed best to my ma
To call me Nicola—
Nicola, Nicola—ha! ha! ha!
Nicola.

At last he came to the little chapel, gained its sunny side, and, with a sigh, dropped down where soft, silver-gray weeds covered the warm earth.

Yes, he had intended to go after Celestine—at least, he had made her think so the night before, when he

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lounged about the bright smithy, and watched the flying sparks; but, luckily, he had not told her so in unmistakable words—trust Nicola to look out for that! Promises and obligations are such heavy, heavy burdens! He knew this from many a painful experience. That was why he was called "Lazy Nicola."

Naturally, the evening before, his half promise had not seemed a burden. He was too fond of pretty Celeste for that. To-day, when he loitered past the inn on his way to get his girl, when he felt the heat and the dust, and saw how the bright drops stood on the dancer's foreheads, it seemed to him very pleasant to talk with Celeste of a cold winter evening by the blazing fire, or to sit with her on the vineyard terrace in the sunshine of an October morning; but here, to whirl round and round in the sweat of his brow—he really wasn't foolish enough for that; and what pleasure could it be even to her? That her whole body thrilled with impetuous vitality, that her untiring feet ached to dance, and that only too willingly would she have shown her little white-clad person by the side of the handsomest fellow of the village—of all this, lazy, comfort-loving Nicola really had no suspicion.

For Nicola was not only the handsomest lad, but also the richest and best brought-up youngster in the whole neighbourhood, and so used to having the ripe fruit fall into his hand, that it hardly seemed worth while to stretch it out.

Certainly he didn't care to make any unnecessary exertion, as in the present case; and so he basked in the sunshine till he fell asleep, and thus got rid of all troublesome thoughts.

Celeste, in the meantime, still stood by the hedge, and thought about the words of the priest, which she knew very well how to apply. At first she was rather angry. She wrinkled her fair forehead, and contemptuously turned down the corners of her mouth; then she looked more thoughtful. At last the young girl laughed a little scornfully, murmured something to herself about "stupidity," and declared, turning to her parents, that she would take her godmother some apples. So she filled a basket with the red-cheeked fruit, and slowly walked away. At first she went in the right direction, but suddenly turning back, she followed a narrow path behind the garden toward the bush-bordered road leading to the little chapel.

This chapel is dedicated to St. Joseph, whose image adorns the open, cell-like shrine. Over his shoulders hangs a sheepskin, and he leans upon his staff, while from under his weather-beaten halo his face beams forth peacefully.

He may well look friendly, for the devout who turn to him in trouble are almost always pretty young girls.

St. Joseph of Jaupierre is widely renowned. His especial delight is to help young girls get the right husband. He always grants their requests if such requests are consistent with their temporal success and their eternal welfare.

At all events, he never leaves the petitioner in distressing uncertainty as to her fate, but he announces his intentions in the matter by an unmistakable sign. After silently making a wish the girl takes a stone and throws it upon the roof of the little chapel, and if the stone stays there it foretells with unfailing certainty that her request shall be granted; but if the stone rolls off the saint has a good reason for refusing his help.

For some little time after she had reached the chapel Celeste stood still, glancing now and then at the saint, and thinking scornfully of her lazy lover

A SLANDER ON FAT PEOPLE.

OBESITY IS NOT THE RESULT OF GLUTTONY, BUT A DISEASE.

A SPANISH COUNT REDUCES HIS WEIGHT 34 LB. IN 22 DAYS

BY "RUSSELL'S" TREATMENT.

The "Cork Herald" says: "Any remedy that can be suggested as a cure or alleviation for stoutness will be heartily welcomed. There has recently been issued a well-written book, the author of which seems to know what he is talking about. It is entitled "Corpulency and the Cure" (256 pages), and is a cheap issue (only 3d.) published by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bloomsbury, London, W.C. It appears that Mr. Russell has submitted all kinds of proof to the English Press. The Editor of the "Tablet," the Catholic organ, writes: "Mr. Russell does not give us the slightest loophole for a doubt as to the value of his cure, for in the most straightforward and matter-of-fact manner he submitted some hundreds of original and unsolicited testimonial letters for our perusal, and offered us plenty more, if required. To assist him to make his remedy known, we think we cannot do better than publish quotations from some of the letters submitted. The first one, a Marchioness, writes from Madrid: 'My son, Count——, has reduced his weight in 22 days, 16 kilos—i.e., 34 lb.' Another writes: 'So far (six weeks from the commencement of following your system), I have lost fully two stone in weight.' The next (a lady), writes: 'I am just half the size.' A fourth: 'I find it is successful in my case.' I have lost 3 lb. in weight since I commenced (two weeks).' Another writes: 'A reduction of 18 lb. in a month is a great success.' A lady from Bournemouth, writes: 'I feel much better, have less difficulty in breathing, and can walk about.' Again, a lady says: 'It reduced me considerably, not only in body, but all over.' The author is very positive. He says: 'Step on a weighing-machine on Monday morning, and again on Tuesday, and I guarantee that you have lost 2 lb. in weight without the slightest harm, and gained vast improvement in health through ridding the system of unhealthy accumulations'"

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"I won't do it!" she said softly, set her basket down, and folded her arms defiantly. "Certainly not——"

Here some bright, angry tears rose to her eyes.

But the longer she looked at the saint the friendlier he seemed to smile, until at last mischief shone from every wrinkle of his brightly-painted face, as if he'd like to say: "Yes, yes."

At last the young girl whispered, and, as if somebody had forced her down, suddenly she sank upon her knees, raised her hands, and prayed from the bottom of her soul:

"Give him to me, dear St. Joseph—oh, do give him to me," with whatever else her innocent heart prompted.

And such perfect trust came over her that she sprang up with all confidence, laughingly shook the tears from her blushing cheeks, and began to look about for the stone which, it was to be hoped, would prove no disappointment.

But the seekers had already been too numerous. Nowhere about was there a stone fit to throw; and even as far as the hedge the path was as clear of stones as a well-tilled wheat field. The best thing to do was to bring one's own stone.

Celeste wandered away up and down the path, but without success. Then her glance fell upon the basket, and with a smile she bent over, and without stopping to remember the stories past of that fruit, she threw it with all her might upon the chapel roof.

A second she waited with beating heart. Then she breathed more freely, for the apple did not fall back, but rested upon the ridge pole of the little church. She leaned against the door post, folded her arms in her lap, and looked up with thankful heart to the saint, who now showed his usual calm and friendly countenance. Little by little she sank into the loveliest day dreams.

Nicola had not enjoyed sweet slumber long. The sun blistered the whitewashed walls of the chapel and burned fiercely down on him, for in this blessed province, even so late in the year, the sun is still hot enough to make the grapes sweet, and the drinker hot and thirsty. The sleeper began to be troubled by a bad dream, which presently became a frightful nightmare.

He dreamed that he was sweltering in purgatory, and like a forge, the fire was only on one side of him, so that on that side he grew perfectly crisp. Piteously he begged a lively little devil who kept stirring up the fire to let him turn round, but the tiny fiend sniggered derisively and answered that he must keep quiet, that as he was uncommonly fond of comfort now for 10,000 years, he wouldn't need to stir, for there would be plenty of time after that to toast his other side!

But poor Nicola suffered the worst from the thirst which the infernal flames aroused, and sighing sadly looked upward. There he saw above him, floating on the clouds, the garden of paradise. The angels seemed to be gathering in the harvest, for they shook a magnificent apple tree till the fine fruit rolled down on all sides. Nicola eagerly watched for some to fall in his neighbourhood. He called to the angels to take pity on him, but nobody seemed to notice him. Then among all the blonde heads there appeared a dark, roguish face, with Celeste's well-known features. This brunette seraph did not seem blind to the agonies of the sufferer, for just when he believed he should faint away she seized a beautiful, red-cheeked apple and threw it down to Nicola, so that it hit his penitent breast a smart rap. Then his rigid limbs relaxed, he sprang up.

Purgatory and paradise vanished, and the bright autumn sun shone over him. But near him, in the green grass, lay the fruit of paradise. As his thirst had remained he seized the apple, bit into it thoughtfully, but eagerly, and devoured it to the very core.

When he had finished that and had thought a little about his dream, with awful clearness he perceived that his vision might come true. Like a crushing burden the idea settled upon his soul, that he ought to turn over a new leaf, that now he must take hold in earnest, that he, too, must bow before the first law: "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread." And the future seemed to stretch out before him like a long, dusty road.

Suddenly he remembered the dark-eyed angel, and with heartfelt longing he thought of the shamefully deserted Celeste, the only person who could scatter flowers along that dreary, toilsome path through life he was determined henceforth to travel.

He sprang up more quickly than he had ever done before, and hurried along the chapel to the path. There he saw the lovely girl sitting dreaming on the threshold. When she heard his step and looked up the new spirit in him shone from his eyes and spoke in the pressure of his hand, as, seizing hers, the young fellow asked eagerly:

"Celeste, at the next village festival will you dance with me as my little wife?"

She answered simply:

"Let us thank St. Joseph."

MARIANNE WITTICH.

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CHIVERS'

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IMMENSE STOCK. New and secondhand, FROM 10s. MONTHLY. Carriage paid. Free wheels and rim brakes. Illustrated Price Lists Post Free.—THE SILVER QUEEN CYCLE Co. Ltd., 221 Tottenham Court Rd, London, W

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For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

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Men who are weak and suffering from nervous exhaustion, loss of vigour, Varicocele, &c., can be successfully and permanently cured without operation or detention from business by THE DR. COLLINS most improved and rational method medical science has ever yet produced.

Particulars and proofs of successful cures sent free on receipt of address.

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When a lady, who has discovered a simple means of Self-Cure will be happy to send particulars of same to any sufferer from this distressing complaint. Free on receipt of stamped addressed envelope. ADDRESS:

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A SUM of from 12s. to 25s. per week can be earned in spare hours or evenings by either sex everywhere.—Send addressed envelope for particulars to Box 24, Eclipse Works, 89 Aldersgate Street, E.C.

HAIR DESTROYED.

Send me an envelope (stamped and addressed) and I will tell you how to remove all superfluous hair **free of charge.** (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Miss E. V. (Room 3), 193 Oxford Street, London, W.

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I was for years; by chance I came across a simple home remedy that reduced me from 17st. to 10st. 12lb., and I will willingly send particulars **free** to any sufferer enclosing stamp. Mrs. L. E. FELL, 193 Oxford Street, London W.

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Vie d'Or puts 10 years on the life of the hair.

SOLE AGENT:
GUSTAV ROSSELLI, 4 New Park Street, Park Lane, LEEDS.
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THE BRAIN GYMNASIUM

In these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, Short Stories, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by first post on Monday, May 28th, 1900.

No. 118.

When can nineteen be more than twenty?

No. 119.

Subtract 45 from 45 in such a manner that there shall be 45 left.

No. 120.

A draper dividing up a piece of cloth into yard lengths found he cut off one yard per second. The piece of cloth was sixty yards in length. How long did it take him to cut up the whole?

No. 121.

Form a square word with words meaning:

REPOSE
ALWAYS
WITHERED
A PLANT

No. 122.

An uncle with a turn for figures presented his youthful nephew with a box of soldiers, but made it a condition that he should not play with them till he could discover, on arithmetical principles, how many the box contained. He was told that if he placed them three in a row there would be one over; if he placed them four in a row there would be two over; if five in a row, three over; if six in a row, he would have four over. The total number was under 100. How many soldiers did the box contain?

No. 123.

Form the name of an English military commander with the first and third letters of the equivalents of the following:

A COUNTY.
A KNAVE.
FEELING.
TEMPER.
TO ENCIRCLE.
ELEVATION.
TO SHAKE.

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Nos. 84 to 99.

The prize of £2 has been awarded this week to Mr. Oscar Frankenstein, of 1 St. James's Terrace, Regent's Park, N.W., whose solution was the first correct one dealt with.

Each of the following has been awarded a copy of "Hagar of Homerton," by H. E. Dudeney:

F. Wey, "Rhianva," Rock Avenue, New Brompton.
Mrs. Henry Fay, 55 Moyne Road, Dublin.
Miss Hettie Scott, 10 Queen's Road, Portsmouth.
E. Hutchings, 4 Kingsgate Street, High Holborn, W.C.
Charles Harwood, 15 Colfe Road, Forest Hill, S.E.
W. Crampton, Glazebrook, Manchester.
H. B. Thompson, Bracknell, Berks.
Miss Maud Hunt, 137 Whitefield Road, Liverpool.
Alfred Hindley, 60 Everton Road, Liverpool.
M. W. Daws, 21 Parliament Street, Hull.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES.

Nos. 100 to 105.

No. 100. When it is the half of five. F *IV* E.

No. 101. If you write stale tales, at least do not steal the slate

No. 102.
S equel.
N eat.
O rder.
W an.
D aft.
O utfit.
N ew.

No. 103. PIPECLAY.

No. 104.
CI G AR.
N O W.
PEA S ANT.
A C E.
MERC H ANTS.
D E N.
AN N UL.

No. 105.
CHAP
HERE
AREA
PEAR

WHAT TO DO TILL THE DOCTOR COMES

For information read

WHAT TO DO IN EMERGENCIES,

By Dr. ANDREW WILSON.

Cloth. Price 1s.

"It is a book that should be in every house."
Liverpool Daily Post.

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THREE GOLD MEDALS AWARDED.

JOHN NOBLE GUARANTEES

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An Ideal School Garment. Thoroughly well made with saddle top, long full sleeves, and pocket.

LENGTHS AND PRICES:

21	24	27	30	33 in.
1/6	2/-	2/6	3/-	3 6 ea.
36	39	42	45 in.	
4/-	4/6	5/-	5/6 ea.	

Lengths are from top of neckband to edge of skirt in front. Carriage, 4d. extra.

Well-knitted CAP, as sketch, 1/-; postage, 2d.

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JOHN NOBLE Ltd. have been singularly fortunate in securing an attractive collection of the latest Novelties of British and Continental Manufacture, at prices which mean a great saving to their Customers. A LARGE BOX of PATTERNS of these new Goods and of standard DRESS FABRICS sent post free to any address, together with the

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MOURNING ORDERS

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10/6

MODEL 1500.

The Coat has the latest American-shaped collar, tight-fitting back, and loose front, fastened with barrel buttons, but may be worn open or closed. The Skirt is the latest full shape, and the complete Costume is only 10/6; carriage, 6d. extra. Skirt alone, 5/6; carriage, 5d. extra. Chenille-Toque (as sketch), trimmed flowers, ribbons and wings, price 8/11; carriage, 6d.

THE NEW ETON SUIT.

MODEL 200.

A smartly cut, tailor-finished Eton Jacket and well-made Skirt, in new design. Price complete, 10/6; The Skirt alone, 5/6; carriage, 5d. Also supplied in the fashionable Khaki Drill for 13/6; carriage, 6d.

Good Straw Hat (as Sketch), 2/11½; carriage, 6d

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"Asolo, Italy, Feb. 19th, 1900.
"To JOHN NOBLE Ltd.
"Dear Sirs,—It is well worth while sending to you, for I know no costumier in Italy who could produce such smart Costumes as yours, even at a much higher rate.
"Kindly register my measurements for future use.—Yours, &c.,
"M. NORMAN NERUDA."

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Young Ladies' Coat and Skirt Costume, consisting of a well-cut Coat, with sacque back and good-fitting Skirt, made in the JOHN NOBLE Cheviot Serge or Costume Coating.

LENGTHS AND PRICES:

30	33	36	39	42	46	50 in.
7/11	8/6	9/-	9/6	10-	10/6	10/6 ea.

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Girl's Fancy Straw Hat (as sketch), trimmed silk, buckle, and quills. Price 7/11; carriage, 6d.

PATTERNS SENT POST FREE of the very durable fabrics in which the Costumes are made: The John Noble Cheviot Serge and The John Noble Costume Coating. A Full Dress Length of either Cloth (6yd. 52. wide) for 7/6; carriage, 8d. Colours: Black, Navy, Brown, Myrtle Fawn, Khaki, Grey, and Royal Blue. Sizes in Stock of Ladies' Costumes are 34, 36, 38 in. round bust (under arms); Waists, 24, 26, 28 in.; Skirts being 38, 40, 42 in. long in front. Larger or Special Sizes made to measure, 1/6 extra. *Please mention "SHORT STORIES" when writing.*

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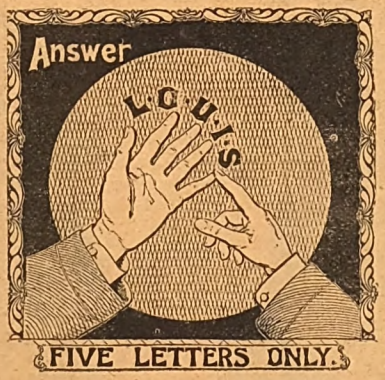

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KEEP THE FEET DRY AND PREVENT FATIGUE.

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HERE'S THE PAPER YOU'RE LOOKING FOR.

SHORT STORIES

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN

No. 595. FOR WEEK ENDING MAY 26TH, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

How's Your Liver?

So long as that long-suffering organ, the Liver, is working in a satisfactory manner, we are scarcely cognisant of its existence, but let it become deranged and we are soon made aware of its importance.

The Usual Symptoms of Sluggish or Disordered Liver are Constipation, Coated Tongue, Biliousness, and Nausea, particularly on rising in the morning. Severe frontal Headache, pain between the Shoulders, and feelings of faintness. The Appetite is poor, or altogether lost. The Temper is irritable, and there is often Palpitation, Sleeplessness, and Weakness, with Nervousness and Low Spirits, verging on Melancholy.

It is generally overlooked that much of the work of Digestion is done in the small Intestine *after* the Food leaves the Stomach, and in close working union with the Liver. Guy's Tonic has a particularly favourable influence upon this Intestinal Digestion. It stimulates the Liver and gall bladder to pour out a flow of Bile on to the Food, by which acidity is neutralised. Guy's Tonic also reinforces the strength of the pancreatic juice, by which all the bread and flour foods (known as Starch Foods) are converted into various forms of sugar, so that the Liver can then easily and finally transform such into the grape sugar which is so nourishing to our health and strength.

The beneficent influence of Guy's Tonic, which begins in the Stomach is thus very far-reaching and favourable, so that following the use of Guy's Tonic people get better digestion both in the Stomach and Intestines, and a more healthy action of the Liver, which, in turn, ensure a pure healthful circulation of the Blood. The Liver symptoms then disappear, simply because they cannot exist when the Digestion is good, the Liver is again active and the Blood pure, three results which are attained whenever Guy's Tonic is used.

Mr. J. H. Kight, of Albert Street, Wednesbury, Staffordshire, writes:

"Having suffered from severe Liver Complaint for "the last three years, with Pains in the Back and "Mental Depression, I had tried nearly everything "without benefit, but after taking three doses of your "Guy's Tonic the Pains in the Back have entirely gone, "and *I feel as I have not done before for several years.* "I shall recommend Guy's Tonic wherever I go."

A new size (Six Ounce) Bottle of Guy's Tonic, price 1s. 1½d., is now on sale at all Chemists and Stores.

10/6 ALLEN FOSTER & CO., 10/6

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"ALFOSCO" COSTUMES

BUY DIRECT AT FIRST COST FROM THE LEADING FIRM OF LONDON MANUFACTURERS.

DESIGN NO. 256

10/6

ALL PATTERNS AND SKETCHES POST FREE.

Colours in Specialite Serge and Venetian Cloth are Black, Navy, Grey, Fawn, Brown, Myrtle, Purple, Electric, New Blue, Cardinal, Dark Grey, &c. Any length cut at **1/3** per yard, 52in. wide.

DESIGN NO. 257 **10/6**

Design No. 256. Half-a-Guinea, LADIES' CHESTERFIELD COAT AND SKIRT, cut in the latest shape, and made in all the shades of **Allen Foster & Co.'s Venetian Cloth,** or in their **Specialite Serge**—two splendid wearing fabrics. The Coat can be worn open or closed. The Skirt is cut full, with inverted pleat at back. Price only **10/6**; carriage paid, 6d. extra. The Coat can be lined through for 3/6 extra, and Skirt lined, good linenette, 2/6 extra. This Costume in the New Melton Coating will be 17/6.

Design No. 257.

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Allen Foster & Co.'s ILLUSTRATED SKETCH BOOK AND CATALOGUE will be sent **post free** together with **patterns and self-measurement form** on application. This sketch book gives illustrations of **leading lines** of ladies' indoor and outdoor Costumes from Half-a-Guinea and upwards. Muslin and Pique dresses, Costume Skirts, white and coloured Underskirts, Cycling Skirts, Blouses, Shirts, Corsets, &c. **Write at once for this list of bargains.** Prompt attention paid to all letters and orders. Money returned if goods not approved. Ladies are invited to call at our new Showroom, 47 Golden Lane, London, E.C.

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5	Pianos, £40 each	200	0
3	Cash Prizes, £30 each	90	0
3	Cash Prizes, £25 each	75	0
5	American Organs, £20 each	100	0
20	Ladies' Bicycles (free wheel), £7 17s. each	357	0
20	Gents' Bicycles (free wheel) £17 17s. each	357	0
5	Cash Prizes, £10 each	50	0
10	Cash Prizes, £7 10s. each	75	0
10	Cash Prizes, £5 each	50	0
20	Cash Prizes of 50s. each	50	0
50	Gents' Rolled Gold Waltham Levers, 50s. each	125	0
300	Ladies' Sterling Silver Watches, 30s. each	450	0
200	Cash Prizes of £1 each	200	0
250	Electro-plated Teapots, 15s. each	187	10
500	Gents' Umbrellas, 15s. each	375	0
500	Ladies' Umbrellas, 15s. each	375	0
100	Pairs of Witney Blankets, 15s. pair	75	0
500	Cash Prizes, 10s. each	£250	0
500	Handsome Meat Carvers, with Steel in Case 10s. per set	250	0
500	Gents' Gun-metal Watches, 10s. each	250	0
500	Ladies' Umbrellas, 7/6 each	187	10
1,000	Ladies' Dress Lengths (Navy Blue Serge, 6 yds., double width) 7/6 each	375	0
400	White Linen Table Cloths, 70in. square, 6s. each	120	0
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15,409		£6,641	10

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Every tablet of **Watson's Matchless Cleanser** is enclosed in a Wrapper, with signature up the centre of same. Save the WHOLE Wrapper (tops of Wrappers will be disqualified), and send, postage or carriage paid, to **Joseph Watson & Sons Limited, Whitehall Soap Works, Leeds,** not later than SEPTEMBER 30TH, 1900. Each package will be counted as one lot; separate entries must be sent under separate covers. If any parcel arrives, postage or carriage not being fully paid, such parcel will be refused. Be careful to see that the full postage is paid. Each parcel sent in must contain the full name and address of sender, and number of Wrappers sent in must be marked on the same paper. On outside of parcel write lezibly "**Prize Competition.**" The prizes will be awarded in the above order to the senders of the highest numbers of Wrappers. A list, giving result of the Competition, will be enclosed with each prize when it is sent out. Every wrapper must have first contained soap. No employee of Joseph Watson & Sons Limited will be eligible. All prizes will be despatched about October 25th.

WATSON'S MATCHLESS CLEANSER

Is pleasant to use, its washing qualities are well-known. Dirt flies before it, and the washing is done quickly and easily. **It has the largest sale of full-weight 1-lb. tablets in the world.** Sold by all Grocers, Oilmen, &c., throughout the United Kingdom.

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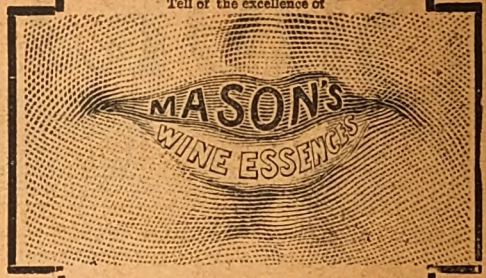

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Every man suffering from Varicocele and the allied troubles, should send for treatise, describing their Causes, Symptoms, Results, and Successful and Painless Treatment without surgical operation or the use of cumbersome trusses and electrical appliances. Will be sent sealed, post free, three stamps.

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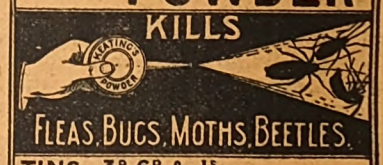

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To Economical Mothers!

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Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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SHORT STORIES

No. 595.] For the Week Ending May 26th, 1900. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

A HEARTY LITTLE EVENING.

THERE were two people sitting in the cosiest of arm-chairs in the cosiest of the Hyde Park Mansion flats. One was a girl of about twenty years and her companion about five years her senior.

Doris shook her fair little head.

"I don't think I'd care for it, dear," she said.

The younger girl made an impulsive movement. "Do, Doris, I am sure it will be great fun—and I should so love to go," she cried.

Doris looked at her, a little cold smile on her proud lips.

"Go, then," she replied.

"How can I? I'm not on the stage like you, and I can't go to supper by myself. Fancy if any of the dad's friends were to see me—why I should get killed."

"Of course, I forgot. Well, read me the letter again."

Fifi took up a sheet of paper and read.

"DEAR MISS STANDISH,—Couldn't you fix up an evening to have supper with Dick and myself after the show? We both come off early and if you would ask Miss Phillips to come with you, we would just be a quartette, and ought to have a hearty little evening.

"With kind regards,

"Yours sincerely,

"CLARENCE HERBERT."

"He doesn't want us—it's that Dick of yours that has made him write that," put in Miss Phillips.

Fifi blushed.

"Well, I daresay, but Mr. Herbert is very anxious to meet you; he told me so. He admired that portrait of you so much, that he said he thought you must be very beautiful."

Doris shook her head.

"Little flatterer, I don't believe a word of it; you made it up to gain your own ends. As a matter of fact I believe both Dick and Herbert are in love with you."

Fifi laughed.

She was charmingly pretty, of the dark, impulsive Southern type, and delighted in admiration, which she found unstintedly given her by every member of the stern sex. Among women her friends were few and far between. In fact she had often been heard to say she had but two who were really fond of her. One was the old cook at home and the other was Miss Doris Phillips,

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the cold, somewhat supercilious beauty, with whom she was at present staying.

"Say you'll go, Doris—there's a dear, I have never been out to supper in my life, and I am sure it will be fun."

"Very well," said her friend a trifle wearily, "I don't mind, I will endure the society of two strangers—both devoted to you—for a whole evening for your sake, but on your own head be it if one knifes me, while you devote your whole time to the other!"

Fifi rose and kissed the other girl.

"You're a good girl—I'm sure it will be ripping, we can go to the play first and then meet them after. I will write and tell him so."

"Yes do, and then come and tell me about Dick again. I have to drag out everything from you—you never tell me of your own accord."

There was no reply to this, save the scratch, scratch of a quill propelled at a great rate over a sheet of paper, accepting the invitation to supper and appointing the time.

"There! That will do. How do you spell Athenæum Theatre?"

"Let me see if you have done it right," and Doris held out her hand for the envelope.

"Good gracious, child, how have you put the stamp on? A stamp is intended to occupy the right hand top corner of the envelope and to stand upright, not balance on one edge in the centre of the letter!"

"Then I must write the address again. What a bother, it doesn't matter for him!"

"On the contrary, I daresay he thinks differently. These swell actors are very careful of everything."

"Well, I daresay you know best. There! I've done it again. That will do."

"Yes, that is better. Send Harriet to post it and then come and tell me about Dick."

Fifi rose and quitted the room, her long black dress sweeping round her slight graceful figure in becoming folds. Presently she returned and sat down by the fire.

"Now tell me!" said Doris, clasping her hands round her knees, and looking intently at the other.

Fifi looked at the fire, and smiled.

"There is nothing to tell. I met him at the Flower

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Show, and then again at lunch that day when I was with Mr. Herbert. He likes me—I think."

"Think! you know he does."

"Well, yes, I know he does, and I like him too," and the speaker raised her beautiful brown eyes to her friend's face.

"H'm!" said Doris judicially. "That proves nothing. Has he asked you to marry him?"

"Doris, how brutal you are!" cried Fifi recoiling.

"Nonsense—I am matter of fact—I used to be romantic like you—once, but that is gone now."

"You talk as if you were fifty years old."

"I feel it. Go on now, has he asked you?"

"Not exactly—but he asked if I would like to marry an actor."

"And you said 'No,' of course?"

"I don't think I did."

"Fifi, how headstrong you are. Why you know nothing of the man at all. The next thing I shall hear is that you have married him at the registrar's."

"Well, what am I to do? Look at the home I live in: a mother with a temper that makes her scarcely human, a father who drinks—no future, no money!" And the great eyes filled with tears.

"Poor child, it is awful, but it might be worse."

"It couldn't be worse!" she cried petulantly.

"You don't know if this Dick has any money."

"No, he told me he had nothing but what he made."

The listener's eyes hardened suddenly.

"Terrible! I know the sort. Fifi, it will never do. I have a presentiment that it would never do. How could you live when he was out of an engagement?"

"Well, I can go on the stage too, and work."

Doris smiled a little.

"I don't think, dear, you would make much at that. You can't sing or dance, you have never been taught even to speak properly—no, I am afraid it is not much good looking at that!"

"Of course you look on the dark side of things—you make enough on the stage. Look at the clothes you wear; look at the flat you live in—I could surely make half as much as you—and that would satisfy me."

But Doris shook her head dubiously.

"Then to crown it all—I love him!"

The truth was out at last.

Doris looked at the flushed and beautifully passionate face.

"Don't say that," she said gently.

"It is true—I love him, love him. And all the world may know it! I don't care if he hasn't a penny in the world. He told me he loved me the other night at Earl's Court, and I love him too!"

The other's refined lips curled ever so slightly in a half-pitying, half-contemptuous manner.

"And he is twenty years older than you?"

"More than that."

"Good gracious, an actor over forty without a penny! Is he a widower, or perhaps he has a wife or two living?"

"How dare you insinuate such things of my Dick! He is the soul of honour," cried Fifi, flashing to her feet and panting with indignation.

"Sit down, sit down," said the other calmly.

"What a fiery little temper it has to be sure. The time has come, I can see, when I must tell you something, which I hoped never to tell anyone. Years ago, when I was only sixteen, I went on the stage, as you know. I was very pretty, of a demure and sedate type of beauty which attracted attention inasmuch as it showed out such a contrast in a burlesque of rosy-cheeked laughing boys and girls. I never painted my face as the others did, nor curled my hair in every elaborate style. I used just enough colour so that I did not look worn and ill under the bright lights, and I never ogled and smirked on the stage. To me it was an absorbing pursuit. Of course this had an unexpected result. Every town we visited, increased my swelling list of devoted admirers. Presents poured upon me, and flowers filled my rooms wherever I went. When the address came with a gift it was always returned, but many were sent anonymously. But I never wore them. Sometimes I went out with the other girls, but only when I discovered it was to the best place in the town, not any sort of supper ever saw me, and then I was always as cold and distant as possible. But nothing seemed to matter. The ruder I behaved, the more they seemed infatuated. I suppose it was a change to them after the fawning adoration lavished upon them by every other girl. For they were the men in the best circles only mind. At last, however, fate decreed that I should meet my match.

"Let me see if you have done it right."

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"It was at Woolwich, and he was an officer quartered there. From your description he was much the same type of man as Dick St. Ledger. Tall, clean shaven, with a heavy, rather sensuous face, but such manners! Such grace and winning ways that I will swear no woman could ever hold out against for long.

"I treated him as I had the others, but my scathing words and cold remarks seemed to have no effect on him. He came up brighter than before after each rebuff. You can guess the sequel?"

"You married him?" said Fifi breathlessly.

"Yes, I married him! Of course he resigned his commission. The ladies of his regiment would not receive a burlesque actress. Then his family cut him. His father disinherited him and his mother wrote him an awful letter, saying he had brought the family to disgrace and it would kill her! She died less than six months afterwards.

"Then he got the secretaryship of a club. It leaked out to whom he was married; the members began to run after me (most of them had been admirers of mine in the old days); there was a scandal, because my husband was very jealous and thrashed a man in the club because he spoke of me. Then he had to leave the place. After that, one thing after another went wrong. Archibald—that was his name, took to gambling and his ill-luck was phenomenal. First his money went, then mine, then my jewels, then our home, and when the baby came there was nothing to clothe him with. We did not live together after this for long. He told me once I was the cause of his downfall. I dare say he was right, but it was a terrible thing to say to one so proud as I. So I left him and went back to my profession, where I have been ever since.

"So you see matrimony with someone you know nothing about did not turn out a bed of roses for me, dear, and, I fear for you, my own experience has been so bad."

"And where is he now?" asked Fifi.

"Dead. I read his death in the papers about two years ago. He went utterly to the bad after I left him; I believe he became one of a gang of thieves or something terrible. Anyway, he disgraced himself absolutely. The police were after him when he died. They told me he died in a wretched lodging in Birmingham, but I never found where they buried him. It seemed so terrible that a gentleman should come to such an end as that. He was co-respondent in two divorce cases also, *en passant*," she added, with a short, hard laugh.

"What a good thing he is dead."

"Yes, I suppose it is. His solicitors wrote to me saying his family would allow me £300 a year as long as I remained unmarried."

"You won't want that long now, will you? If Sir Everett Miller marries you, you will have thousands."

"Yes, we shall be married at Christmas. I suppose I shall have to have him. He is very good to me, but I am doubtful of the issue both for myself and you."

Fifi poked the fire.

"Dick isn't like that. He is older too, much older, his hair is quite thin on the top."

"That proves nothing dear, the older the worse sometimes; but I will see him myself to-morrow and then tell you what I think of your Dick."

* * * * *

Fifi was dressed first the next night and stood before the long glass in the little drawing room fastening two crimson roses in her hair.

Her dress was very becoming to her slight figure, and the flush of excitement on her charming face made her more beautiful than before.

Doris, coming in silently, stood and admired the girl. She was dressed in some soft flame-coloured silk trimmed with black and fashioned after some design of the wearer's own. In fact, Fifi had made the dress herself, and it suited her perfectly (not excelled even by the sweeping draperies of Doris, from one of the leading Bond Street houses), from her bare white shoulders to the tips of her embroidered shoes.

She led the way downstairs.

"Come, Fifi, if you are done admiring yourself, let me put on your cloak, and we will go."

The other turned to receive the white fluffy mantle, an exclamation of delight breaking from her at sight of Doris.

"How beautiful you look—and what a lovely belt that is!"

"Yes, do you know, I have not worn it for ages. Archibald gave it me on my honeymoon. He designed it and had it made. You see, each link is a gold snake, holding a diamond in its mouth." And, muffling herself up to her proud little chin in her velvet cloak, she led the way downstairs.

They went to the Haymarket Theatre. The piece was

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of the modern order of plays that vaguely bored the *blasé* and left an unpleasant taste in the minds of the younger members of the audience.

At last the curtain fell, and they went down in the vestibule.

Standing with his back to the door was a tall, slight, and very fair man. His face was not handsome, far from it, but it was a clever and a powerful face. The face undoubtedly of an actor, and a good one.

Fifi gave her companion's arm a little pinch.

"There is Mr. Herbert, but Dick isn't there!" she said.

A moment after the tall actor had joined them.

"I must apologise for St. Ledger," he said, "but he had to go round to the club just on business, so I will take you two ladies round to Cupidd's and he will join us."

So stepping into Doris's brougham they drove away.

Fifi was overflowing with delightful (if somewhat vague) anticipations, and even Doris unbent a little from her usual cold attitude and chatted with the peppery young actor who seemed determined that the coachman did not know the way and would not be told.

However, a short time after and they were comfortably ensconced at a table holding four.

"It is hard work for you to have to amuse two of us, Mr. Herbert," said Doris as she drew off her gloves.

The young man bowed. "I consider myself the most honoured of all men, to have at my table two women that half London would give their ears to speak to."

Fifi opened her brown eyes wide.

"Doris perhaps, but nobody knows me" she said.

"Beauty is never unknown," he replied in a low voice, then, turning to the waiter, he said with a quick change of tone:

"Are we to have nothing to eat at all to-night?"

That functionary fled precipitately and returned a moment after, balancing various plates in his hands. He handed Fifi her soup and then came round to do the same to Miss Phillips. But his unlucky star was in the ascendant for he tripped and deposited the entire plate of fragrant fluid on Doris's dress!

That lady was less discomposed than one might have expected, but she rose.

"Don't mind my going into the cloak-room, please; I dare say the woman in charge will be able to do something for me. I can't sit all the evening with pieces of vegetable sticking on me. Go on with supper please, I shan't be long," and she rustled away, the penitent waiter in abject attendance.

Fifi and Herbert, left alone, got on wonderfully. The young actor admired the striking beauty and naïve manners of his companion, and forgot for the moment the fact that he had a wife—somewhere, who was doubtless awaiting his return.

Suddenly there was a stir at the door, and a moment after, Dick St. Ledger made his way to the table.

"What, all alone? How abominable!" he said as he shook hands.

"Why abominable?" asked Fifi, looking at him with her great penetrating eyes.

"Don't glare at me like that, you make me nervous. I mean abominable, because we are three, and that will be slow for Herbert!"

The latter laughed.

"My *vis-a-vis* has met with an accident to her dress. The confounded waiter upset the soup over her," he said.

Dick turned, showing a murderous scowl on his handsome face.

"Where is the man that did it!" he said.

"Dead I should think. First Mr. Herbert swearing at him and now you scowling after him, I should think it was enough for the poor man!" cried Fifi.

"Not to mention the cold, awful look that Miss Phillips gave him, as she rose from the table," put in Herbert.

"Is your friend cold?" demanded St. Ledger.

"Yes, rather; at least some people think so. She is a Londoner and they are not impulsive you know."

St. Ledger dropped his fork.

"How disappointed I am! I was told I should meet some warm, passionate, half Spanish beauty!"

Fifi gave him another look from under her dark brows.

"Who told you that?" she demanded.

"Goodness knows! I forget everything when you glare at me with those eyes of yours," he murmured in reply.

"Don't keep saying that, I glare at everyone!"

"Ripping—and I like it! Waiter, the salt," he said plaintively.

"Your friend is gone a long time," said Herbert, more for the sake of saying something.

"Well, it was a good deal of soup; I expect they are washing the skirt," replied Fifi easily. Let it be said she was quite happy and not anxious about the fate of either Doris or her gown.

The nearness of St. Ledger was enough, and the glance he gave

"It is hard work for you to have to amuse two of us, Mr. Herbert," said Doris.

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her from his dark eyes, now and again, told her the intoxicating secret that so many girls have been told before. The future she declined to look at; the past she closed the page upon; the present, the rose-coloured palpitating present, was all she cared about.

Herbert began to have an uncomfortable feeling that he was the third party, and it bored him a little, especially when St. Ledger and Fifi entered into a quiet *tête-à-tête*, the subject of which was easy to guess with one glance at the man's eager, and the girl's smiling face. The actor was just making up his mind to fall upon the unhappy waiter when Doris reappeared seemingly little the worse for the accident.

She glanced at the back of Dick's head, and then at Herbert, and smiled.

"When he is disengaged I want to introduce him to you," he said.

He put down his glass and rose from his seat.

"Don't hurry, thanks. The back of his head seems quite familiar to me. Somehow I fancy I have met him before."

"Hardly. He is American, and up to a few months ago has always acted there. He has never played in London before—ah, St. Ledger, let me present you to Miss Doris Phillips, the lady of the gown!" as the other turned to fill his glass.

Dick bowed mechanically, and then raised his eyes to Doris's face.

His own became instantly livid! With a choking sound as of one trying to speak and not able, he put down his glass and rose from his seat, striding rapidly to the door.

Doris, on her part, was no less agitated. Her face became white and her eyes dilated as if she saw something that fascinated her with horror. Such a look as one might give to one risen from the dead.

Herbert rose in alarm and hurried after his friend.

"What on earth is the matter, St. Ledger? Are you ill?" he cried.

"No," said the other hoarsely as he went out. "But I can't stop. That woman at the table is my wife!"

"Gracious! I never knew you were married."

"I thought she was dead. I wish she were. Had I had any doubt about it, the belt she is wearing would have put me straight. I gave it her myself!"

"And what about Fifi?" The question rose to his lips involuntarily.

"Fifi, be hanged—what about the others!"

ERROLL STANHOPE.

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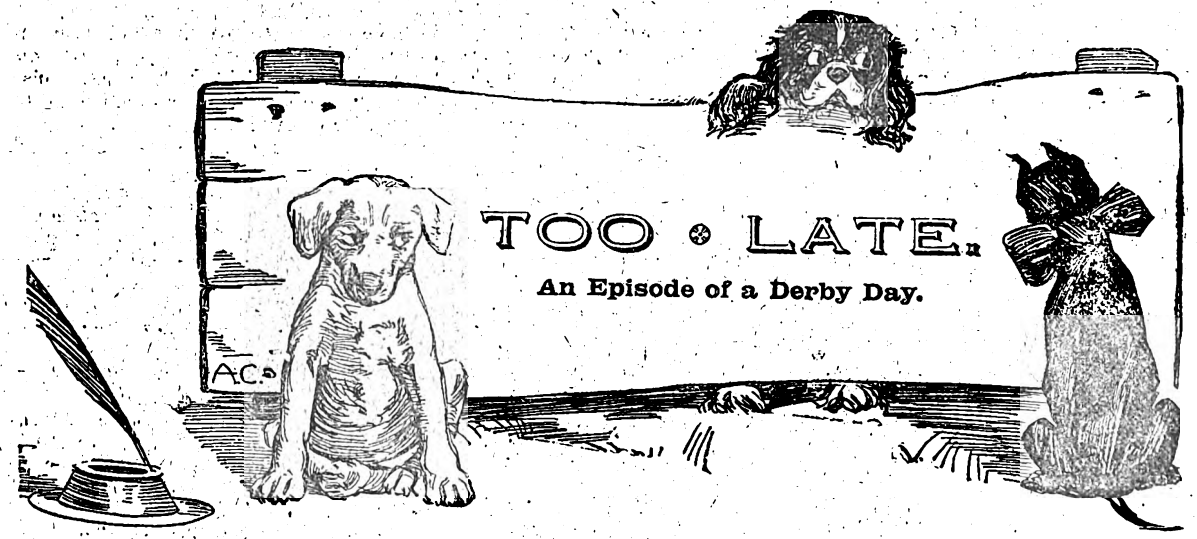

It was Derby day. The vast station at Waterloo was not large enough to contain the crowd who jostled each other in their attempts to reach their trains.

I am not a sporting man myself and had forgotten that it was likely to be a horrid day for travelling when I had accepted an invitation to spend a few hours at Hampton Court. However, by dint of a judicious half crown to one of the officials, I presently found myself out of the bustling throng and comfortably ensconced in a first-class carriage.

My attention was attracted by a number of smartly dressed persons evidently belonging to one party. They paused close by the compartment I was in and I could hear disjointed scraps of their conversation. From this, I gathered that they were going "racing."

Presently a young man joined them who was well-known to me, being the son of one of my oldest friends. He was a fine looking boy of about twenty-three but with a careworn expression on his handsome face which ill-befitted his years.

After exchanging greetings with his friends, with whom he seemed immensely popular, he drew a girl aside. The action brought them still nearer to me. Though unacquainted with Miss Bowen, I knew her well by sight. She was the daughter of a rich financier, a man of narrow views but intensely honourable and upright, universally respected by all who knew him. He was well-known for his special dislike to all forms of gambling, and had on more than one occasion inveighed in public against racing, not, he was always careful to explain against racing itself, but because of the ruin it so often brought in its wake.

I was a little astonished therefore to see his daughter on her way to the Derby, even under such excellent chaperonage as Lady Dunbarton, who was evidently the head of the party.

The young couple did not seem to notice me, and without wishing to listen to what I was not meant to hear I could not help doing so.

"I wanted to see you a minute alone," the boy said hurriedly, "because I had a talk with the pater last night about my debts. He told me nothing could induce him to help me again, because he will not believe in my promise neither to touch cards or bet in the future if he would pay up this time."

"Oh, Guy, what shall we do then? My father won't sanction our engagement till you can honestly say you are free from debt."

"Darling, that is what I wanted to see you about," the boy said eagerly. "I have had an awfully straight tip from a fellow this morning, and I can get some money on a good thing at long odds. If it wins I shall be clear, and I will never make another bet or touch a card again. If I fail, Beryl, I don't know what I shall do—probably clear out of the country!" and he laughed rather hoarsely.

"Are you quite sure that your father won't change his mind, those good things have been known to fail so often. They say the favourite is sure to win, and oh dear, Guy, it would be worse than ever if you lost."

"It appears that my pater has quite as great an objection to betting and gambling as yours has. His father and grandfather nearly ruined themselves and their families by gambling, and both finally committed suicide in remorse or despair. My father told me last night that even with the assistance of my mother's money, it has taken him all this time to put the old place on its legs again. He impressed on me that he absolutely refused to pay up for me, and that nothing would alter his decision till he really saw I had quite given up betting and cards. That is all very well from his point of view, but most of the debts are debts of honour, and I cannot get another shekel out of old Levi. No, this is my only chance, and if it fails I can follow my grandfather's example."

He uttered the last words so low that I doubt if the girl heard him. She seemed to be pondering over what he had been saying.

"Guy," she said at last laying her hand on his arm, "if you would only not bet to-day, perhaps my father would help you out of this trouble, as, though he has a name for being austere and hard, he really is very kind-hearted and generous; also he has never refused me anything."

"Except permission to be engaged to me," answered Guy. "It won't do Beryl, he would never understand how I was tempted and what an arrant ass I have been. If he did comprehend the latter fully he would be less inclined than ever to hand you over to the care of such a fool."

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The girl looked dubious, but further conversation was rendered impossible by a move being made to get into the train.

"We cannot all go together," said Lady Dunbarton looking round—"Guy, you take care of Beryl."

As luck would have it they jumped into my carriage.

"Hallo, Colonel!" exclaimed Guy on seeing me, "who would have thought of meeting you in this motley throng!"

I explained whither I was bound, and he introduced me to Miss Bowen. When we were *en route* I told them I had inadvertently overheard their conversation and was freely absolved by both from intent to listen.

"Look here, my boy," I said, "I am not a rich man as you know, but if a couple of thousand would help you, you can have it and pay me back at your convenience."

"My dear Colonel, a couple of thousand would be but a drop in the ocean, I owe something more like ten—It is awfully good of you all the same, but it would do no good."

I was fairly startled, having no idea that the youngster was in debt to such an amount. It was quite impossible for me to help. A sum like that was beyond me. I no longer wondered at his father refusing to make a hole in his estate for that figure.

Just before the train stopped at Wimbledon, where I had to change, I made an effort to try to persuade him not to make this final (and what I inwardly thought idiotic) attempt to recoup himself; but it was no good. He had it fixed in his head that he might win this large sum by backing the dark horse, and nothing I could say was of any avail. He gave my hand a great grip at parting, saying:

"Colonel MacFarlane, you were always a brick to me ever since I was about two feet high, and I am awfully grateful to you for proposing to help me me now, but it is no use."

They both waved to me as the train went away. I inadvertently watched it out of sight forgetting my pet superstition that to do so was unlucky.

With a sigh I turned away wishing heartily I had been rich enough to give the boy what he required, for in days gone by his mother had been very dear to me and at one time I had hoped to make her my wife till Sir John Corbin came along with his handsome face and winning ways and won her.

It was for the memory of her and of what I might have been that I remained a bachelor; and the boy was extraordinarily like her. I could think of nothing else all day and turned over a dozen projects in my mind to help the lad out of his difficulties.

At last I hit upon what I thought a likely plan and determined to try and carry it through.

I refused my friend's invitation to stay to dinner and hurried back to town by an earlier train than I intended. As I journeyed I turned over in my mind all the pros and cons, and just as I had arrived at a satisfactory conclusion another train ran alongside of the one I was in.

We were proceeding rather slowly and I could distinctly see the occupants of the carriages as we glided close together.

All at once I recognised Guy Corbin alone in a compartment—but how changed since the morning.

His face was deadly white and drawn and he looked fearfully upset. Like a flash it passed through my mind that his coup had failed. Almost before this thought was out of my head I saw him plunge his hand into his breast pocket and draw a small revolver out.

Before I could realise what was happening there was a report and I saw the boy sink back lifeless on the seat. Even then I wondered how it was that he had returned alone and where the rest of the party were, but in an extra special edition of the evening papers this was explained.

"Mr. Corbin," said these authorities, "had experienced heavy losses at Epsom. He had separated himself from the rest of the party at the station, an easy matter in such a crowd, and apparently had come by a later train."

Two days afterwards I happened to meet old Sharp my lawyer. He also did business for the Corbins.

"A sad affair, Colonel," he said, shaking his head, "and sadder still as, had he but known it, he was actually possessed of the sum of money which he required. Old Anthony Corbin, who, you will remember went to Australia many years ago had just died and left him his sole heir. I heard it from our agents this morning."

He bustled away, such things were distressing of course and awkward for the family, but not in his line. He left me with a big ache in my heart, for, though the boy was nothing to me, I could not help thinking of his mother.

M. Craigie-Halkett.

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Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

—HE PREPARES A SURPRISE AND SUFFERS DISAPPOINTMENT.

For a few minutes after dinner the other evening there was something of a mystery about the Bowser mansion. Mr. Bowser insisted on answering a ring at the basement bell, and there was a whispered conversation, and a large package was taken in. Then he asked Mrs. Bowser if she would run upstairs and busy herself for a quarter of an hour. She complied without asking any questions, and by-and-by was told she might come down. She found Mr. Bowser beaming with good nature. He was even holding the cat on his lap.

"And now about all this mystery?" queried Mrs. Bowser.

"Sit down, dear, and let's have a little talk. I'm an old kicker of a husband, ain't I?"

"Why, I suppose you are like all other husbands."

"I'm a lot worse, and I'm ashamed of it. I've been thinking things over for the last week, and I'm wondering how you have stood it with me as well as you have. If I'd married any other woman, there'd have been a separation long ago."

It was a drawing done in crayon.

Mrs. Bowser fully realized that Mr. Bowser in too good nature was just as dangerous as Mr. Bowser in kicking mood, and she replied that she had no fault to find and called his attention to a new book she had bought that day. He was not to be switched off, however.

"Do you remember our first meeting?" he asked, as he melted a little more. "I was at your house to see your father, and you entered the room. I fell in love with you at first sight. I thought you the smartest, sweetest and cosiest little woman in all this world, and in five minutes I had made up my mind to win your heart and your hand. Years have passed since then, but I still think of you as I did that day."

"That—that is good of you," replied Mrs. Bowser, as her face flushed with pleasure and she forgot the peril of the situation.

"It was a case of love, and I hope it will go on to the end. There are times when I lose my temper and talk about separation and all that nonsense, but you shouldn't take any notice of that."

"I never do."

"No, you go along being the best little woman heaven ever let live, and that makes me ashamed of myself ten times over. I'm a mean old curmudgeon; I'm a contemptible old kicker; I'm a nagger, and if you weren't an angel you'd have left me long ago. Can you forgive me for the way I have acted in the past?"

Mr. Bowser's chin quivered, his voice broke and tears started in his eyes.

The cat made up her mind that torpedoes were being planted for a grand blow up, and she got down off his knee and sought shelter under the piano. Mrs. Bowser said there was nothing to forgive, and, wiping the tears from her own eyes, she began talking about the new cook who had arrived that day. She had got so far as to say that the girl appeared to know her duties when Mr. Bowser interrupted with:

"If I ever do any more rowing about this house, I hope you'll call in the neighbours to kick me down the street. It isn't the right thing to do. A wife has just the same legal rights as a husband. He has no legal or moral right to set himself up as a big general and run things. It would have served me right if you had turned on me some time with the axe. I never read of a wife killing her husband without wondering if he wasn't just such a mean man as I am. So you can forgive me and give me another chance?"

Mrs. Bowser assured him that she could, and asked him for the latest news from South Africa.

He didn't seem to hear the question, but got up and passed into the drawing-room and lighted all the gas jets. When he returned, he was bubbling over, and it was a minute or two before he could say:

"Well, angel of earth, your old kicker has got a little surprise for you. It will show you that I'm not so bad

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after all. I may raise rows and say mean things, but I appreciate you at your full worth just the same."

"And you've got a surprise for me?" she asked.

"I have, and it's a rattling good one. Come in and behold it."

On the wall in the drawing room where he had taken another picture down to make room for it, hung a portrait of Mrs. Bowser in a gilt frame. It was a portrait done in crayon. It was after a photograph when she was twelve years old. It had been done by the office boy in Mr. Bowser's office. He was an office boy without a lazy hair in his head. When he wasn't going to the post office or sweeping out, he was making portraits or hunting about secondhand shops to find frames which could be cut down to fit them. His industry had given Mr. Bowser an idea, and Mrs. Bowser's crayon was the result. It had all been included in seven and sixpence per week, except the frame.

"Why—why, who is it?" asked Mrs. Bowser, as she stood before the picture.

Being from her oldest photograph and the style being so ancient, she could not recognize herself.

"Who is it?" echoed Mr. Bowser, as he slipped his arm round her and gave her a kiss. "Well, it's the picture of the best little wife on top of this earth, and she's standing just beside me at this moment. What have you got to say about it?"

"It — it was awfully kind of you."

"Don't mention it. I wish I could have presented you with forty of 'em. It's you to a dot. I think it the best piece of work I ever saw. That boy will make his mark if he keeps on. Now, then, I'm going to ask Davis and his wife to run in and look at it."

"I don't think I would—not to-night."

"But why? Davis claims to know all about art, and I want his criticism. He'll try to find some flaw, but he'll have mighty hard work. Mrs. Davis will probably want one done by the same boy."

"I don't think they are home this evening," said Mrs. Bowser as she tried to hide her feelings and took a closer look at the picture.

The crayon was the work of black and white industry. The office boy wasn't up in backgrounds. He considered backgrounds and foregrounds a useless waste of material. He had never taken particular notice of how the heads and arms of his fellow beings were nailed on, and in working from a photograph he had corrected several mistakes of the photographer. He had enlarged the mouth, been generous with the ears and given the chin a slant on an entirely new line. He had also improved the eyes to match the mouth—that is, one of them was cocked up in surprise and the other drawn down in a squint.

Mrs. Bowser's heart stood still as she noted these things and a dozen more. That crayon was a token of love, and how could she find fault with it? She couldn't.

She gave Mr. Bowser a kiss and ran upstairs as if to hide her coyness. He was calling it coyness and chuckling and rubbing his hands when Davis walked in.

"What on earth is that?" he queried as he looked at the crayon.

"And you don't recognise it!" exclaimed Mr. Bowser.

"Hanged if I do, or you either! It may be your cook, your grandmother, or the woman who sells flowers in the streets. Ye gods! Bowser, take it down!"

He brought it down with a smash, and jumped on it.

"What's wrong with it?"

"It would scare a horse if you hung it up in the stable! Why, I could hold a stick of crayon between my toes and do better work! For heaven's sake, but don't let your wife see it!"

"But she has seen it."

"Then go and apologise, buy her off; lie out of it. Poor woman! I can understand how she is suffering! Fix it up, Bowser — for mercy's sake, fix it up with her! Good night! I was going to ask you to step round to the club, but you want to get rid of that."

Mrs. Bowser was listening on the stairs. The cat came creeping in as Mr. Bowser stood there, and wondered where the shrapnel shell would burst.

The clock ticked five minutes away into eternity, and then Mr. Bowser moved. He moved with a jump. He rushed forward and grabbed that crayon and pulled on it until he broke the wire. Then he raised it on high and brought it down with a smash and jumped on it again and again.

The cat flew out of the room, and Mrs. Bowser uttered words of thankfulness. By and by Mr. Bowser came up to go to bed. He was silent and stern.

"Did—did anything fall downstairs?" asked Mrs. Bowser after a while.

"Yes; something fell!" he sternly replied. "And it will probably be better, while our solicitors are consulting about the separation, for you to go home to your mother. I believe the train leaves at noon!"

M. QUAD.

NEXT WEEK: **"It was a Bedstead and a Bureau which Spoilt a Happy Evening."**

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The Horseman in the Air.

A TALE OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR.

ONE sunny afternoon in the autumn of the year 1861, a soldier lay in a clump of laurel by the side of a road in Western Virginia. He lay at full length upon his chest, his feet resting upon the toes, his head upon his left forearm. His extended right hand loosely grasped his rifle. But for the somewhat methodical disposition of his limbs, and a slight regular movement of the cartridge box at the back of his belt, he might have been thought to be dead. But he was asleep at his post of duty, and, if detected, would be dead shortly afterwards.

The clump of laurels in which the criminal lay was in an angle of the road, which, after ascending southward a steep acclivity for two miles, turned sharply to the west at that point, running along the summit for perhaps fifty yards. There it turned southward again, and went zig-zagging downward through the forest. At the point of that second angle was a large flat rock, jutting out from the ridge to the northward, overlooking the deep valley from which the road ascended. The rock capped a high cliff; a stone dropped from its outer edge would have fallen sheer down one thousand feet on to the top of the pines. The soldier's station was on another spur of the same cliff. Had he been awake he would have commanded a view, not only of the short arm of the road and the jutting rock, but of the entire profile of the cliff below it. It might well have made him giddy to look.

The country was wooded everywhere, except at the bottom of the valley to the northward, where there was a small natural meadow, through which flowed a stream scarcely visible from the valley's rim. This open ground looked hardly larger than an ordinary house-yard, but was really many acres in extent. Its green was more vivid than that of the inclosing forest. Away beyond it rose a line of giant cliffs similar to those upon which we are supposed to stand in our survey of the scene, and through which the road has somehow made its climb to the summit. The configuration of the valley, indeed, was such that from our point of observation it seemed entirely shut in, and one could not but have wondered how the road which found a way out of it had found a way into it, and whence came and whither went the stream that parted the meadow two thousand feet below.

No country is so wild and difficult, but men will make it a theatre of war; concealed in the forest at the bottom of that military rat-trap, in which half a hundred men in possession of the exits might have starved an army into submission, lay five regiments of Federal infantry. They had marched all the previous day and night, and were resting. At nightfall they would take to the road again, climb to the place where their unfaithful sentinel now slept, and, descending the other slope of the ridge, fall upon a camp of the enemy at about midnight. Their hope was to surprise him, for the road led to the rear of his camp. In case of failure their position would be perilous in the extreme; and fail they would, should accident or vigilance apprise him of the movement.

The sleeping sentinel in the clump of laurels was a young Virginian, named Carter Druse. He was the son of wealthy parents—an only child—and had known such luxury and cultivation as wealth and taste were able to command in the mountain country of Western Virginia thirty years ago. His home was but a few miles from where he now lay.

One morning, he rose from the breakfast-table and said, quietly, but gravely:

"Father, a Union regiment has arrived at Grafton. I am going to join it."

The father lifted his head, looked at his son a moment in silence, and replied:

"Go, Carter, and whatever may happen I hope that you will do what you conceive to be your duty. Should we both live to the end of the war, we will speak further of the matter. Your mother, as the physician has informed you, is in a critical condition; at the best she cannot be with us longer than a few weeks, but that time is precious. It would be better not to disturb her."

So Carter Druse, bowing reverently to his father who returned the salute with stately courtesy, left the home of his childhood to go soldiering. By conscience and courage, by deeds of devotion and daring, he soon commended himself to his fellows and his officers; and it was to these qualities and to some knowledge of the country that he owed his present perilous duty at the extreme outpost. Nevertheless, fatigue had been stronger than resolution, and he had fallen asleep.

What good or bad angel came in a dream to rouse him from his state of crime, who shall say? Without a movement, without a sound, in the profound silence of the late afternoon, some invisible messenger of Fate touched with unsealing finger the eye of his consciousness—whispered into the ear of his spirit the mysterious awakening word which no human lips have ever spoken, no human memory has ever recalled. He quietly raised his forehead from his arm and looked between the laurels, instinctively closing his right hand about the stock of his rifle.

His first feeling was one of keen artistic delight. On the colossal pedestal of the cliff, motionless, at the extreme edge of the capping rock, sharply outlined against the sky, was an equestrian statue of impressive dignity. The figure of the man sat the figure of the horse, straight and soldierly. The face of the rider, turned slightly to the left, showed only an outline of temple and beard; he was looking downward to the bottom of the valley. Magnified by its lift

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against the sky, and by the soldier's sense of the formidable lenses of a near enemy, the group appeared of colossal size.

For an instant Druse had a strange, half-defined feeling that he had slept to the end of the war, and was looking upon a noble work of art reared upon that commanding eminence to commemorate the deeds of a heroic past of which he had been an inglorious part. The feeling was dispelled by a slight movement of the horse, which, without shifting its feet, had drawn its body slightly backward from the verge; the man remaining immobile as before. Wide awake, and keenly alive to the significance of the situation, Druse now brought the butt of his rifle against his cheek by cautiously pushing the barrel forward through the bushes, cocked the piece, and, glancing through the sights, covered a vital spot in the horseman's breast. A touch upon the trigger, and all would have been well with Carter Druse. At that instant the horseman turned his head and looked in the direction of his crouching foeman—seemed to look into his very face, into his eyes.

Is it, then, so terrible to kill an enemy in war?—an enemy who has surprised a secret vital to the safety of oneself and one's comrades?—an enemy more formidable for his knowledge than all his army for its numbers? Carter Druse grew deadly pale; he shook in every limb. His hand fell away from his weapon, his head slowly dropped until his face rested on the leaves in which he lay. This courageous and hardy soldier was near to swooning from intensity of emotion and excitement.

It was not for long; in another moment his face was raised; his hands resumed their places on the rifle; his forefinger sought the trigger. Mind, heart, and eyes were clear, conscience and reason found. He could not hope to capture that enemy; to alarm him would but send him dashing to his camp with his fatal news. The duty of the soldier was plain; the man must be shot dead from ambush—without warning, without a moment's preparation, with never so much as an unspoken prayer, but he must be sent to his account.

But no—there is a horse; he may have discovered nothing—perhaps he is admiring the sublimity of the landscape. If permitted, he may turn and ride carelessly away in the direction whence he came. Surely it will be possible to judge at the instant of his withdrawing whether he knows. Druse turned his head and looked down. Below he saw creeping across the green meadow a sinuous line of the figures of men and horses—some foolish commander was permitting the men of his escort to water their horses in the open—in plain view from a hundred summits.

Druse withdrew his eyes from the valley and fixed them again upon the group of man and horse in the sky, and again it was through the sight of his rifle. He was calm now. His teeth were firmly but not rigidly closed; his nerves were as tranquil as a sleeping babe's—not a tremor affected any muscle of his body; his breathing, until suspended in the act of taking aim, was regular and slow. Duty has silenced conscience; the spirit had said to the body, "Be still." He fired.

* * * * *

At this moment an officer of the Federal force, who, in the spirit of adventure or in quest of knowledge, had left the hidden bivouac in the valley, and climbing the slope had made his way to the lower edge of a small open space near the foot of the cliff, was considering what he had to gain by pushing his exploration farther. At the distance of a quarter-mile before him, but apparently at a stone's throw, rose from its fringe of pines the gigantic face of rock, towering to so great a height above that it made him giddy to look up to where its edge cut a sharp, rugged line against the sky. Lifting his eyes to the dizzy altitude of its summit, the officer saw an astonishing sight—a man on horse backriding down into the valley through the air!

Straight upright sat the rider, in military fashion with a firm seat in the saddle, a strong clutch upon the rein to hold his charger from too impetuous a plunge. From his bare head his long hair streamed upward, waving like a plume. His right hand was concealed in the cloud of the horse's lifted mane. The animal's body was as level as if every hoof-stroke encountered the resistant earth. Its motions were those of a wild gallop, but even as the officer looked they ceased, with all the legs thrown sharply forward as in the act of alighting from a leap. But this was a flight.

The officer was filled with amazement and terror by this apparition of a horseman in the air. Almost at the same instant he heard a crashing sound in the trees—a sound that died without an echo, and all was still. Pulling himself together he ran rapidly obliquely backward from the cliff to a point a half-mile from its foot. Thereabouts he expected to find his man; and he naturally failed. In the fleeting instant of his vision his imagination had been so wrought upon by the apparent grace and ease and intention of the horse and rider, that it did not occur to him that the line of march of aerial cavalry must necessarily be directly downward, and that he would find the object of his search at the very foot of the cliff. An hour later he returned to camp.

This officer was a wise man; he knew better than to tell an incredible truth. He said nothing of what he had seen.

* * * * *

After firing his shot private Carter Druse reloaded his rifle and resumed his watch. Ten minutes had hardly passed when a Federal sergeant crept cautiously to him on hands and knees. Druse neither turned his head nor looked at him, but lay without a motion or sign of recognition.

"Did you fire?" the sergeant whispered.

"Yes."

"At what?"

"A horse. It was standing on yonder rock—pretty far out. You see, it is no longer there. I am a great marksman; you know I once shot a match with Washington's ghost and beat him."

The sergeant was shocked and startled. He looked searchingly at Druse. The man's face was white; his eyes were restless, and glittered with a strange, uncanny light. The sergeant, still on hands and knees, involuntarily backed a little way from him.

"Look here, Druse," he said, after a moment's silence, "it's no use making a mystery. I order you to report. Was there anybody—anybody at all—except the horse?"

"Yes."

"Who?"

"My father."

The sergeant rose to his feet, and walked rapidly down the road towards the valley.

EDW. THORBURN.

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AN AUTOMATIC DOG.

JACK MOSER rented a cottage in the country in order to please his wife. The house lacked a number of modern improvements, and, unlike other cottages advertised, was not "within five minutes walk of the nearest railway station"; but it had an ivy-clad veranda, woodbine twisted gracefully over the doorway, and Jack's wife was satisfied. She had a "vine-embowered cottage," for which she had frequently yearned.

Jack thought they ought to have a ferocious dog to warn off tramps, midnight robbers, and other obnoxious visitors, but his wife wouldn't listen to such a proposition. She said she would as soon have a robber or a tramp in the house as have a cross dog about. She intimated that her husband might bring home a Bengal tiger, or a sheep, or some other wild beast, but if he purchased a dog she would go straight home to her mother's. Her deep-rooted aversion to the canine tribe was owing to one of her dear friends having been bitten by a mad dog several years before.

Jack had set his heart upon having an able-bodied dog for protection, but as he had been married only a few months, and the honeymoon still retained some of its saccharineness, he was willing to make one more sacrifice to augment his wife's happiness.

But he didn't dismiss the dog from his mind; and one day, while reflecting upon the feeling of security such an acquisition would afford, he conceived an idea. He would have a dog built according to a design of his own invention. It might be a little more expensive than a genuine dog, but at this early era of his married life money was not so much an object as Mrs. Moser's felicity.

The automatic animal was successfully built. It was of the bull-dog brand. One eye was bloodshot and the lid swollen, and one ear had a ragged edge as if it had been bitten in an old feud. It's jaws were flabby, the undamaged eye had a wicked glare, and the whole contour of the brute was one of repulsiveness in the first degree.

Observation had taught Jack that when a man wished to gain a dog's confidence, he instinctively patted the animal on the head. The interior department of Jack's dog, therefore, was fitted up with machinery of a very sensitive character, which was connected with a wire running from a button on the animal's head, and when this button was slightly pressed, the internal contrivance would go off like an alarm clock—one of those diabolical inventions that waken up every member of the family except the servant girl, in whose room it is at work.

When the dog was patted on the head, the brute would make a slight movement, open his jaws, and emit a prolonged and sonorous growl that would cause the cold shivers to meander along the spinal column of a snuff-shop wooden Highlander.

The dog was brought home, and Jack got his wife to test it. She said it was an ugly brute, but she wasn't afraid of any home-made dog; still when she patted it on the head, at her husband's suggestion, and was greeted with an unexpected and blood-curdling growl, she let escape an ear-piercing shriek, and fainted dead away.

The dog was an overwhelming success. It was regarded as an offensive partisan by every member of the tramp fraternity, who halted at the gate and threw a hungry glance towards the cottage.

One day Jack and his wife left home for a short visit to the seaside. The house was securely closed, and the automatic dog planted where it would do the most good. That very evening a couple of dirt-begrimed tramps stopped in front of the cottage. One of them unlatched the front gate, and was about to enter, when suddenly his gaze became riveted on the object in the path.

"Whe-ew!" he softly whistled, backing away from the fence. "Great Cæsar, Jimmy! just take a squint at the size of the brute."

"Yer not afeerd of him, are yer, Bill?" said his companion.

"But look at the wicked eye of him! He's a terror. None of him fer me, if yer please, Jim."

"Yer a coward, Bill," said the tramp addressed as Jim. "See yer uncle make friends with the terror."

And Jim cautiously approached Moser's dog, using all the most wheedling terms of endearment at his command.

"Poor old fellow! Come here, my fine beauty."

Then he whistled encouragingly, and snapped his fingers cajolingly.

"S-sp-p-p-p-p-r-t," he chirped, placing his hand caressingly on the dog's head. "Ho, you old fel——"

At this juncture the dog's body moved forward, his mouth opened, and an awful nerve-distracting "Brrrrr" issued from his throat, and the tramp dashed out of the yard with so much impetuosity and unexpected celerity that he left a portion of his tattered garments clinging to the gate-latch.

"It's mighty lucky for yer, Jimmy, that the big-headed cur didn't lunch off yer hind leg," said Bill, as the twain hurriedly resumed their journey.

Next morning Mrs. Moser's mother arrived.

Wishing to give her daughter a little surprise, she had

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not apprised her of her intended visit. It was Mrs. Moser's mother, however, who received the surprise. And it wasn't so very little either. She saw the dog as soon as she opened the gate and stood undecided whether to advance or retreat.

"What an ugly monster!" she mused. "And Caroline would never have a dog about the house, either! It's very strange. But perhaps it's somebody's animal that had wandered in."

Then she closed the gate between herself and the dog, raised her umbrella threateningly, and cried:

"Get out! Go away, you nasty beast! Shoo! Ugh! You horrid dog!"

But Moser's dog didn't stir.

"Carrie! Car-o-line!" called the old lady; but for obvious reasons there was no response. Caroline was many miles distant.

"Well, I'm not going to stand here all day," finally said Moser's wife's mother, with an air of determination. "I'll see if I can't make friends with the creature. Come Towser," she coaxed. "Good doggy! Nice old Carlo. Here, Prince, come here!" Then the old lady, having almost unconsciously advanced within reach of the dog, slowly extended her hand and began to pat it on the head. "You nice old do——"

"Ouch! Fire! Murder! Caroline! Oh-ooooo-oo!" she screamed, as the dog's deep "Grr-r-r-r-r!" seventeen yards long by a foot in circumference, pierced the adjacent atmosphere. The best previous time made by a badly-scared woman in getting out of a front garden is not on record, but Moser's wife's mother beat it. She was in a hurry. She didn't say so, but she was, all the same.

"Oh, my!" she gasped, when she reached the middle of the road, and discovered that the dog had not followed her, "I thought I was a dead woman!"

Then she looked at her handbag, which she had swung round wildly in her flight, and which had burst open by coming in contact with the gate post.

"I declare if the jar of currant jelly I brought Caroline doesn't lay smashed all to bits! John Moser heard that I was coming, and got that horrid ugly monster on purpose—I know he did! I'll go back home and never set foot in the ungrateful wretch's house again!"

And she left by the next train, fairly boiling over with anger; and one of the first things she did upon her arrival home was to make an alteration in her will.

The next visitor at Moser's cottage was a rate-collector, who had had a variegated experience. He boldly opened the gate, leisurely closed it after him, and started up the path, mechanically fumbling in an inside pocket.

"Whew!" he ejaculated, as the automatic contrivance encountered his vision. "I'll bet that overgrown dog is kept for the special benefit of rate-collectors. Here Bull! Come here, old fellow!" he coaxed. "If I had a gun I'd blow the roof off the savage-looking brute!"

Then he advanced gingerly towards the dog, using kind words that never die, and cautiously placed his hand on the animal's head.

There was a tree near by, and the rate-collector was safely at the top of it before the cadences of Moser's dog's "G-r-r-r-r-r-B-r-r-r" had died away. With the collector time was money, but, all the same, he concluded to remain in the tree and think about one thing and another until the dog retired, or someone came to his rescue. Five minutes devoted to vigorous yelling convinced him that the Moser cottage was unoccupied.

The sun had sunk behind the western hills, bathing the landscape in a field of purple haze, and tall trees in an adjacent meadow were darkly silhouetted against the hazy skies, but the collector didn't enjoy the scenery to any considerable extent, for his position in the tree was becoming uncomfortable, and the dog was still there. And he was annoyed by the animal's harrowing and persistent silence.

Finally the rate-collector concluded to venture down the tree, and take his chances. The feat was accomplished with a rapidly beating heart, and when he safely reached the gate without the dog making a demonstration, his courage quickly returned and assumed huge proportions.

"Perhaps the wretched brute is asleep." he reflected, "I must have revenge." And the thought of revenge made him feel very brave indeed.

He left the gate open, to permit of a hasty escape, and then proceeded to gratify his thirst for revenge.

"The animal is as quiet as a statue, and I'll just give him one vigorous kick for luck, and then glide out of the gate like lightning."

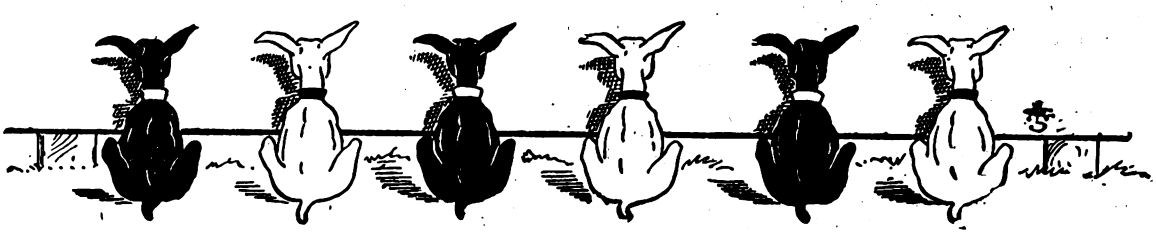
And he bestowed the kick—only one. It was a hearty, one-hundred-pound-to-the-square-inch kick, but it was enough—for the collector. One million pounds in cash would not have induced him to give Moser's dog another kick. Not with the same foot, anyhow. That part of the programme relating to gliding out of the gate like lightning was omitted. But the collector did some gliding nevertheless. He glode round on one foot, nursing the other with his hands, and yelled like a thousand throats. He thought his toes were telescoped into his ankles, but they were not. Two of them were broken, and two were badly bent, but the doctor who dressed his injuries said he thought his patient would be able to dispense with a crutch in about two months.

The rate-collector's fate should teach a man to refrain from attempting to kick the machinery out of a sleeping dog, especially one of the automatic breed. It is a mean advantage to take of the unsuspecting animal.

When Jack Moser returned home, his dog was "still there," showing no signs of hunger or fatigue. When Jack saw the smashed jar of currant jam and a dozen demand notes lying about the front garden, he quickly surmised that his dog had strictly attended to business during his absence.

He contemplates having his automatic dog patented, but when he hears from his mother-in-law he will probably change his mind.

C. H. K.



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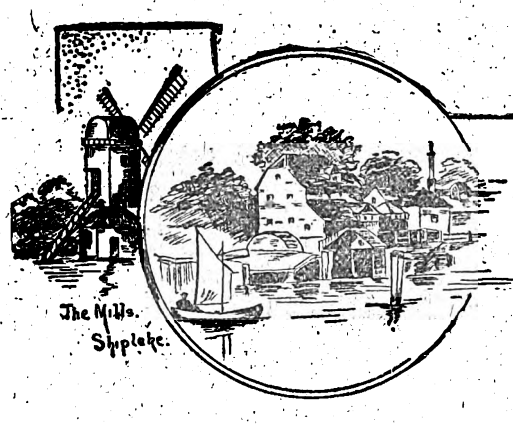

. . HER . . RICH FOOL.

"THIS house to let."

It looked very big and imposing, this notice, and Mr. Dart stepped complacently backward to eye the general effect of it after he had affixed the document safely on the inside of the front room window.

"If people can't read that they must be blind! Now I'll go in and wait for someone to bite at the bait. No bother of estate agents for me—no commission to eat up half the rent. I'll transact my own business, or else I'll go into a lunatic asylum!"

As he sat in the pretty reception room belonging to the house which he had the good or bad fortune to own, he looked not unlike a big bumble bee in the heart of some huge tropic flower.

"It's trouble, trouble and nothing but trouble," grumbled Mr. Dart, as he mused after his own saturnine fashion over the trials incidental to the position of landlord. "When it isn't rates and taxes, it's leaky water pipes, and when it isn't that it's your neighbour's drains overflowing your cellar, or your tenant taking French leave without paying his rent. I wish I was down in the old Stonyfield farm again, growing strawberries and cauliflowers. And I will be, too. I'll give this house to young Harry Field; he's a good boy, and if he really is going to marry t at pretty Olive Melton, it won't be a bad wedding present. I hope she's worthy of him—but women are all artificial nowadays. I suppose I must let him have his own way and go with him to see her this evening. For—Hallo, there! What's wanting?"

A tall, belligerent looking man had given divers energetic jerks to the electric bell.

"Is this house to let?" he demanded, as Mr. Dart thrust his head out at the window.

"Yes, sir, it is."

"How much is the rent?"

"One hundred and eighty pounds per annum."

"It's too much for a house in this locality."

"You think so, sir?"

"Yes, sir, I do."

"Well, sir, what a consolation it must be to you that you're not obliged to pay it."

And Mr. Dart drew his head back and slammed down the window, to the inexpressible rage of the tall man.

Hardly had he ceased congra'ulating himself on this masterly manœuvre than a second ring reminded him that "this house" was still "to let."

This time it was a fat woman, with an abundance of cheap rings on her fingers. She went a l over the house, opened all the cupboards, investigated every separate shelf and finally came to the conclusion that the house "would do."

"For, you see, I want a large house," said she, confidently, to Mr. Dart. "I keep a children's school, and——"

"You do, eh?" said Mr. Dart. "Well, you can't keep it here."

"I've a great mind to take down the bill," he thought, with ruffled temper and face like a radish. "I hadn't an idea that there were such meanness in human nature! Dear, dear, there comes somebody else—two ladies. I wish they were not ladies! I can kick a man downstairs when he says an impertinent thing to me, but I don't know how to deal with women! That nearest one is a clipper!"

The ladies were evidently mother and daughter—a subdued, weak-looking, little woman in black, and a tall, handsome girl of eighteen or nineteen, with brilliant black eyes, a complexion like snow and roses, and a singularly haughty way of carrying her lovely head.

"Sir—" began the mother, as they were ushered into the hall by Mr Dart, but the younger lady interrupted her.

"Do hold your tongue, mother," she said, sharply; "I can manage matters a great deal the best. Are you the agent of this house, sir?"

"Yes," said Mr. Dart, with a queer expression in his eyes.

"And is £180 the lowest rent—the very lowest?"

"Yes."

"I told you so, dear," interposed the elderly lady meekly. "Our means will not——"

"There you go again!" snapped the daughter, "with your everlasting cackle about means, means! Will you show us the house, sir?"

Mr. Dart obeyed, in his inmost heart pitying the subdued mother; the tall young lady swept like a queen through the passages, pausing in each room to survey its adaptations for the purposes to which she had assigned it in her mind.

"I like the house," she said, imperiously, as they paused at length in the hall. "Mother, you must take it!"

"My darling!" deprecated the mother, "one hundred and eighty pounds a year! and papa's salary is only one hundred and fifty, besides the interest we have to pay!"

"Pshaw! do have done with your lecturing. What do I care whether papa is pleased or not? I'm going to be married, thank goodness, and get away from all your

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debts and grovellings and grumblings! A rich fool for a husband is better than no husband at all!"

"But, my dear," the conversation had fallen into an undertone, "you are not sure of it yet, and——"

"Yes, I am," said the daughter, sharply. "Don't I tell you he's completely under my thumb? And do you suppose I would be married from such a hole as that little house in Westwood Road?"

And turning to Mr. Dart, who was an unwilling and unedified listener to the conversation, she said, in a louder accent:

"We shall take the house. My father will call and see you to-morrow. Let this bill be taken down."

And she glided away, more like Queen Semiramis than ever, with the meek little mother following, a look of pained perplexity on her face.

At eight o'clock precisely Mr. Dart was ready.

"Why, uncle!" cried Harry Field gleefully. "How nice you look!"

"Do I?" said the old gentleman complacently. "Well, I flatter myself I am about right! Come on, my boy, or we shall be late."

"It's not far," said Harry. "It's only in Westwood Road!"

"Westwood Road! Westwood Road!" repeated the old gentleman. "It seems to me as if I had somewhere heard that name recently!"

But he could not remember where, and was still racking his brain when they reached the residence of the damsel whom Harry Field enthusiastically termed "his guardian angel."

The apartment into which they were shown was rather of the tawdrily-splendid order—satin-covered chairs, enamelled with stray grease spots; marble mantels, undusted, and a gaudy carpet, strewn with clippings of thread and scraps of paper, forming its chief characteristics.

Presently in walked a tall, beautiful girl, with black eyes and a wealth of raven hair, a smile dimpling her cherry lips and adding a new charm to her lovely face.

"Olive!" said Harry proudly, as he advanced to greet her, "this is my uncle, Mr. Dart, and——"

He stopped short in astonishment, for Olive shrank back, colouring redder than the reddest peony in all the gaudy carpet patterns. They had recognised each other mutually.

"Aha!" said Mr. Dart, plunging both his hands in his pockets. "I think we've met before!"

"Met before?" echoed Harry Field. "When? Where?"

Olive Melton, remembering the very free use of her tongue she had made, was too near the verge of a fit of hysterics to reply coherently, so Mr. Dart calmly narrated the brief interview they had that morning.

Harry's brow darkened as he listened.

"A rich fool!" he muttered, "and completely under her thumb! Olive is this true?"

She could not deny it—she dared not, with the cold light of Mr Dart's glittering eyes upon her.

Mr. Dart's house was "let" the next day to a widow, and the two best rooms are occupied by the uncle and nephew, who keep "bachelor's hall" in fine style.

"And I believe," the widow says, in reference to her two favourite boarders, "that the old gentleman really means to live and die a bachelor; but as for Mr. Harry—as long as there's youth there's hope!"

But Olive Melton's chances are gone.

C. P. Wilkins.

NO ONE KNOWS

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The Editor's decision must be final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding.

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Briton or Boer?

By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

INTRODUCTION.

For years past Britain and the Transvaal have been spoiling for a fight, and it was left to that well-known author, Mr. George Griffith, to write this strong and exciting serial nearly four years ago graphically describing a huge war between the two countries.

The story, coming so soon after the Jameson Raid, was read with unusual interest.

Now that Briton and Boer are in deadly conflict it will be interesting to read the story, and see how far the imagination of the author has actually come true.

CHAPTER XXXV.

The Swing of the Balance.

Captain Murray took immediate advantage of the rout of the Boers to confer with Captains Le Sueur and Celliers, in command of the two companies of Western Rifles who formed the nucleus of the Loyalist garrison of De Aar, as to the most advisable plan of campaign to be adopted.

Not a little to his disgust, he learnt that the series of brilliant successes which had been gained in the North had been if anything more than counterbalanced by a rapid succession of disasters in the South. On the 17th of January the rebel burghers of the Cape had simultaneously risen in arms throughout the whole Southern and Midland districts, with the exception of a strip of sea-board country about a hundred miles in width, stretching from the northern border of Natal to Saldanha Bay.

Inside this, practically every inland town was in their hands, including some of the railway junctions which had been garrisoned by General Goodenough at the commencement of the rebellion. Within the last week the rebels had cut the communication with the coast on the Western, Midland, and Eastern systems, and therefore, with the exception of the Natal troops, the Loyalists found themselves hemmed in between two vastly superior forces, the rebel burghers of the Cape to the South, and the commandos of the Free State Boers to the North.

"We are in a pretty tight place here."

Several skirmishes and three or four battles had been fought along the lines of communication, but in nearly every instance the Loyalists, hopelessly outnumbered, had had decidedly the worst of it.

"Well that's pretty bad news, I must say," said Captain Murray, when he was at length in possession of the facts. "And it takes a good deal of the gilding off what we have been lucky enough to do in the North. It seems, too, that we are in a pretty tight place here, for these fellows won't take their licking lying down, although we have put the fear of God into them to a pretty good extent. They'll be re-forming over yonder in the hills now, and if they've got any artillery, or can get any up the line, they'll very soon knock spots out of the train. Have they got any guns?"

"There are two seven-pounders and three Maxims of ours in the station," replied Captain Le Sueur, rather ruefully, "but there is no ammunition for them. We used all that up before they drove us out. That's our great failing, you know. Either we haven't got guns enough, or else if we have the guns we haven't anything like enough to shoot out of them."

"Never mind that," said Captain Murray cheerfully. "I've tons of it on the train. We took a tremendous lot from Groot Jan's commando at Shoshong. Now, gentlemen, I think the best—indeed the only—thing we can do is to take those guns back, fix up your fellows with a train—there is plenty of rolling stock here, I see—mount your guns on it, and fight our way through to Naauwpoort. De Aar is no use to us now. If we can reach Naauwpoort we shall either join forces with the garrison, if it is still holding out, or have a try to take it back if it's fallen. Then those that are left of us ought to make a dash north for Norvals Pont, get across the river either with the trains or without them, and go for Springfontein.

"You see," he went on, patting the palm of one hand with the fingers of the other, "if we could take Springfontein and get command of the wires, we could soon have news of General Carrington. Then, supposing he has taken Bloemfontein, as I have no doubt he will have done by the time we get there—if we ever do—we shall be able to get in touch with him, and if we do that I shall be very much surprised if the Free Staters don't see several kinds of stars before long."

The two captains of the Rifles at once saw that this was really the only plan of action which offered anything like a decent chance of success, and they at once proceeded to act upon it. The armoured train was pulled out of the station into a position which commanded both lines, and the guns were held in readiness to sweep all the approaches to it in case the rebels should rally and try to prevent the Loyalists from recovering their artillery and fitting up the second train.

But a most wholesome dread of the terrible machine-guns had been so thoroughly instilled into them by the fearful

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slaughter of the last half hour or so that not a man of them had any stomach left to try conclusions with the train again. They had no artillery—which was the one thing that they had not been able to buy during their months of preparation for the revolt—and nothing but shell-fire would give them a chance of disabling their iron-clad antagonist.

The consequence was that the work was carried through rapidly and without opposition, and before a couple of hours had elapsed the two trains, crowded with men, steamed off to the eastward under the eyes of the disgusted rebels, who, with very good reason, were afraid to show themselves within a thousand yards of them.

In order to avoid repetition of details of fighting, which were of necessity almost exactly similar to those which have been already described, it may suffice to say that, after four days and nights of almost continuous fighting, the garrison of Naauwpoort was relieved, Colesberg and Norval's Pont were carried by storm, the Orange River crossed, and a desperate battle fought at Springfontein, out of which the Loyalists came victors with the loss of nearly half their combined forces.

The morning after the victory the joyful news came over the wires that Bloemfontein had fallen; that President Steyn and half-a-dozen of the Free State leaders were prisoners of war, and that Lerothodi had placed himself and twelve thousand mounted men absolutely at the General's disposal.

The message closed with orders to Captain Murray to bring his armoured train with all the forces he could collect up to the capital without delay, as the Transvaal Boers were massing on the frontier round Vereeniging, and the General had decided to move northward at once and fight what would in all probability be a decisive battle.

As the line was now quite open there was, of course, no difficulty in obeying these orders, and that afternoon Captain Murray ended his desperate but brilliantly successful journey of over a thousand miles by steaming into Bloemfontein station at the head of the train-loads of men and horses amidst the rapturous cheers of General Carrington's whole force, and peals of welcoming thunder from the guns and forts.

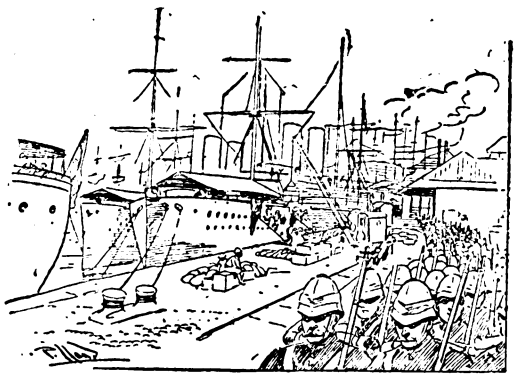
While these events were taking place in the west and centre of the area of operations, General Goodenough in the South of Cape Colony, and Colonel Cox, in Natal, had been standing strictly on the defensive, and strengthening the most important strategic positions as far as the means at their command would permit.

At the same time the rebel burghers of the Cape had concentrated themselves into four formidable commandos of from twelve to fifteen thousand men each, and located at Beaufort West, Middleburg, Burgersdorp, and De Aar, out of all of which positions the Loyalists had successfully been driven after desperate resistance during nearly a fortnight of almost continuous fighting. In the Transvaal two columns, numbering about twelve thousand each, were pushing south on Vereeniging and Volksrust.

Such, then, were the positions of the several divisions of the opposing forces when the news of General Carrington's wonderful march and the fall of Bloemfontein suddenly rang like a thunderclap from one end of South Africa to the other. So far, although the honours of the fighting had been pretty fairly divided, the balance of advantage had distinctly inclined to the rebel side, and it seemed manifest that, unless reinforcements speedily arrived from somewhere, the isolated and outnumbered loyalist forces in the interior must infallibly be caught and crushed between the forces of the Free State and the Transvaal on the one side and the rebel burghers of the Cape on the other.

But the fall of Bloemfontein and the surrender of President Steyn and his Government instantly swung the balance the other way. The majority of the Free State burghers, who, as a matter of fact, had never had any great heart in the revolt, and had gone into it more under pressure from the Transvaal and the Cape Dutch than of their own motion, promptly obeyed the proclamation of General Carrington, subscribed to by President Steyn and his Executive, and laid down their arms on condition of a general amnesty being granted and the Basutos being removed from the country.

This, of course, detached the Free State, now once more the Orange River Sovereignty, from the Boer Alliance, and,



The work of disembarking men and horses went on.

while it reduced the fighting forces of the rebels by something like fifteen thousand men, it increased those of the Loyalists by some five thousand loyal Outlanders, British and Colonials, who promptly volunteered for service, and were armed with the weapons given up by the Free State burghers.

In the Transvaal the news was received first with incredulity, and then, when it could no longer be doubted, with a temporary paralysis of rage and astonishment. It meant that a British force, springing as though by magic out of the wilds of the North, had suddenly driven itself like a wedge between the two sections of the rebels and into the very heart and centre of the Dutch Republican area. Six weeks ago it had numbered less than three thousand men; now, with its native auxiliaries, it was fully twenty thousand strong, magnificently equipped, and flushed by brilliant and continuous triumphs.

Matters stood thus on the 12th of February, when about daybreak the watchers on Signal Hill saw a dense cloud of smoke stretching along the south-eastern horizon. The news was instantly telegraphed down to General Goodenough's headquarters, and transmitted by semaphore down to the fleet in Table Bay.

The *Majestic* and *Magnificent*, with the *Powerful* and *St. George* and the three captured Russian ships, now thoroughly refitted and in perfect fighting trim, weighed anchor at once and put to sea, preceded by the *Boxer*, *Bruiser*, and *Daring* as scouts. As they steamed on, the great smoke-cloud gradually lifted, and underneath it a long line of masts and funnels became visible. It was speedily apparent that they were not ships of war, and therefore the only likely explanation of their advent would be the assumption that they were a fleet of transports conveying the sorely needed reinforcements from Australia or Canada, or both.

It was soon possible to count five-and-twenty of them, all large ships, and evidently of good speed. Presently the glasses of the officers of the fleet showed them that every one of the new-comers was flying either the red or blue ensign with four stars on the field. In a few minutes more signals were being exchanged, and in reply to the question, "Who are you?" the welcome words came back:

"Transports, with troops from Australia."

By this time all Cape Town was out, and the slopes of Signal Hill were soon swarming with people, not all of whom were prepared to welcome their Colonial brethren

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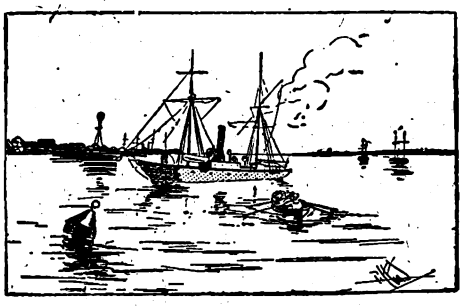
from over the sea with unadulterated delight. The sight was one that Cape Town would not forget for many a long day.

As the two great fleets rounded Mouillé Point the men-of-war stretched out into two long lines, and the transports,



A boat put off from her.

steaming three abreast, and decked from truck to bulwarks with flags, ran in between them, and as they did so the guns of the war-ships thundered out their welcoming salute, which, as the crowd of vessels came into the bay, was answered by another roar which rolled from battery to battery along the shore and up the echoing cliffs of Table Mountain.

All that day the work of disembarking men and horses went on, and when it was over fifteen thousand of the flower of Australian manhood stood on South African soil, full armed and ready to prove with shot and steel that the British Empire is, after all, something more than a geographical expression, and that no part of it can be assailed without risk of attacking every portion of the vast and mighty organism.

It so happened that on the evening of the same day a large private yacht, after replying satisfactorily to the signals of the guard-ships patrolling in front of the entrance to Durban, steamed across the bar and dropped anchor in the Bay off the quay. A boat soon after put off from her, containing six or eight passengers, whom a not very experienced eye could easily have recognised as military men.

One of them, sitting in the stern sheets, with quiet and not very striking features, lighted up by a pair of keen eyes, with a cloth cap covering his close-cropped, iron-grey hair, and dressed rather carelessly in a not over-good suit of grey cloth, was the man for whom the Loyalists in South Africa were waiting so anxiously, and the last man on earth that the rebels wished to see on South African soil, for this was Sir Charles Warren, possibly the only Administrator and soldier who ever went to South Africa and brought back more reputation than he took there. Certainly he was the only one who had never permitted himself either to be tricked in diplomacy or out-generalled in the field by the Boers.

His fellow-travellers in the yacht were some of the smartest officers in the Indian service. How they had managed to get leave at such a period was a mystery, and remained so. Their visit was an absolutely unofficial one. They were, in fact, simply volunteers who had come to offer their services to their loyal fellow-subjects in South Africa.

They went straight on that night by special train to Maritzburg, and from thence up to the front on what was actually a tour of inspection, the result of which proved so satisfactory to Sir Charles that when he returned to Maritzburg he said to Colonel Cox:

"Everything seems to be in excellent order, and as soon as the Australians and Canadians arrive I think we shall be able to take the offensive."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE HAND OF THE STRONG MAN.

A LITTLE after seven o'clock in the evening of the 15th of February four men were sitting drinking coffee and smoking pipes and cigars in President Kruger's drawing-room in Kerk Street, Pretoria, and talking of matters which directly or indirectly affected the fortunes of rather more than half the world.

One of them was Uncle Paul himself, sitting in a stiff-backed, red-velvet-covered arm-chair, which, like the rest of the furniture of the room, was in the very worst style of florid taste, and seemed to have the legend, "Furnish on our hire-purchase system," writ large all over it. The second in temporary importance was Mr. Secretary Leyds and the other two were Prince Regna, who might now almost be described as Envoy Plenipotentiary from the Court of Petersburg to the Transvaal, and Baron Matalha, who, unknown to two of the company, had for some considerable time held, as one might say, a watching-brief on behalf of the Portuguese Government, which in former years he had so long and so faithfully served.

Out of deference to the pious fraud which His Honour sees fit to indulge in as to his alleged inability to understand or speak English, the conversation was carried on in Dutch, and it was of the most strictly private nature. In order to clearly understand its drift, it will be necessary to remember that at this period the Government of the South African Republic had no means whatever of obtaining news from beyond its own borders or those of the Orange Free State.

The last authentic information that had reached Pretoria was the news of the fall of Bloemfontein, which, as has been said, had suddenly rung like a thunderclap throughout South Africa. Every seaport was strictly blockaded; the cables were absolutely under the control of the British, and the land wires, or those which remained of them extended no farther than the frontiers of the two Republics.

The defection of the Free State naturally formed the principal topic of conversation, which, as a somewhat natural consequence, was not particularly cheerful in tone. There was, in fact, a distinct spice of bitterness in it, and in addition to this it partook somewhat of the nature of a four-handed game of draw-poker, with South Africa as the "pot."

All held good cards, that each one was perfectly aware of. The only question was: Who held the best, and who would use them most skilfully? Preserving the simile for the present, it may be added that Mr. Secretary Leyds' game

Four men were drinking coffee and smoking in President Kruger's drawing-room.

inclined to the policy of bluff. His Honour was playing in the style of an old hand, who, when he picks up three kings, allows a deprecatory sneer to flit across his lips and takes two cards. The Prince and the Baron were playing the most perfect game of all—the kind of game that a graven image would play if it knew how.

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It is a somewhat far cry from Bloemfontein to Delagoa Bay, but just then the two places were very closely connected, for, with the Bay blockaded by British ships and Bloemfontein held by a British force, it seemed as though the hand of the hated *rooinek* had at the same time fallen over the mouth and gripped the heart of the so-called Afrikander Nation.

"It seems to me," said Mr. Secretary Leyds, after a lengthy and somewhat awkward pause in the conversation, "that unless we strike a decisive blow, and strike it pretty quickly, the food question will become serious. The rinderpest is spreading fast, and meat is at famine prices. The Kaffirs are making away with the mealies in a wholesale, if unaccountable fashion, and wheat is getting unpleasantly expensive."

"For that you must thank your countrymen, mynheer," growled Uncle Paul, looking at him with an ill-natured glitter in his little eyes. "If it was not for them and their concessions and monopolies the Land could now feed its children; but that is not the talk now. The question is: What shall we do, and when shall we do it? Shall Pretorius march on Bloemfontein and fight Carrington, or shall he join Lucas Meyer at Volksrust and fight another Amajuba and Lang's Nek there? My thought is that we should have done that a week ago or more. The longer we wait the stronger these English will become."

"I don't think myself," said Doctor Leyds, with the air of a man who believes that his finger is still on the pulse of Fate, "that they can ever be much stronger than they are, and even if we have lost the Free State we are still a good five to one stronger. What do you think, Prince?"

"I am afraid, my dear Mr. Secretary, that I not only cannot agree with you, but I feel impelled by my friendship for you and your Government to undeceive you," replied Prince Paul, with the most perfect suavity, and yet also with the air, to revert once more to the poker simile, of one who has just drawn the two cards he wanted to fill his hand.

"What do you mean?" said the Secretary, almost roughly. "Do you mean that Russia and France and Germany will not keep their compact with us? That they will allow England to go on blockading our coasts, and then to pour her troops in from India and England, and perhaps America and Australia, to crush us by the brute force of numbers?"

Here the Baron suddenly dropped his cigar as if it had burnt his fingers, and stooped down to pick it up. When he sat up again his merry, smiling face was as inscrutable as it had been all along, but Prince Paul permitted himself the indulgence of an obvious smile, and said, in answer to the Secretary's somewhat petulant query:

"My dear Mr. Secretary, I can give you the most absolute assurance with regard to Russia, France, and Germany so far as the despatch of Imperial troops from Britain is concerned. I can also promise you again, as I have already promised yourself and His Honour, that if you succeed in your high and laudible aims, those three Powers will instantly recognise the Government of the United States of South Africa as a Sovereign power, and, if necessary, will enter into alliances with it for the purpose of preserving its integrity.

"So far they have done all that could reasonably be expected. Russia has even, so far as we are able to judge here submitted for the time being to the outrage and indignity that was put upon her by the capture of her squadron in Delagoa Bay in order that she might adhere rigidly to the compact of armed neutrality and non-intervention. No doubt a heavy reckoning will be exacted for this at a proper time; but I must remind you that there is one thing that not Russia, or even the whole of Europe, can do, and that is, prevent other portions of the British Empire sending help to their fellow-subjects here.

"Let me tell you now, for your information and for his Honour's, that three days ago fifteen thousand Australians, with ten thousand horses, landed in Cape Town, and that they were followed twelve hours later by seven thousand volunteers from Canada, all armed and equipped to perfection; and, lastly, that two days ago Sir Charles Warren and six of the most experienced officers in India landed in Durban."

"Ah! allermachtij!" the President suddenly cried, hitting his knee a resounding smack. "Is that verdomde kerl here? Soh! Then we must move quickly and strike hard, or he will be after us and all round us. How did you know that, Highness?"

"And how in the name of all that is evil did those Australians and Canadians find the money to get here with? It must have taken a whole fleet of transports, and they are not had for nothing, nor do their owners send them across the world for the sake of an idea," exclaimed the Secretary almost at the same time.

The Baron suddenly dropped his cigar.

"I will tell you," said the Prince, adroitly avoiding the first question by answering the second. "Do you remember, Mr. Secretary, how I warned you some weeks ago to beware of the man who is at once silent and strong?"

"Ah, Rhodes!" grunted Uncle Paul, with a savage snort. "Why does the Lord let such a man as that live to plague His people? Why did not someof those Kaffirs put a bullet or an assegai into him when they had the chance? He is the curse of Africa, that man. But for him we should have had the country by now."

The Baron who was doing more listening than talking, smiled blandly at the angry old man and rubbed his hands gently together, and Prince Paul, with a slight inclination of his head towards the President, went on:

"There I have the pleasure to be absolutely in agreement with your Honour. Cecil Rhodes and his associates are the men who are holding the hands of Europe because they hold its purse-strings. They are the men who for the sake of this Imperial idea of theirs are pouring out their millions in chartering ships for transport and are buying swift ships of war——"

"And have bought Delagoa Bay and the Pungué River," the Baron interrupted very softly. "I am quite in accord with your Highness there. These men have the power of the purse, and, whatever the proverb may say about the pen, the purse *is* to-day mightier than the sword."

"Might we not have heard of that before, my dear Baron?" asked Dr. Leyds, turning somewhat sharply upon him.

"My dear Mr. Secretary," replied the little man with the most perfect suavity, "to be quite frank with you, it never crossed my mind that you were not already aware of it. Did they not tell you in Berlin that Cecil Rhodes had already squared the Government of Portugal, and that, in consideration of certain millions, England was to be permitted to exercise her rights of pre-emption immediately on the outbreak of any war in South Africa? I can hardly believe that Baron von Marschall did not know that when you and he were discussing that other little matter."

Dr. Leyds saw that he had made a bad mistake. He had shown the poverty of at least one card in his hand, but he affected a laugh at his own error and said:

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"Oh! you know, we have heard that old story of pre-emption so often. It is getting almost too familiar for belief. You will not think me rude if I ask, Baron, if your information is popular or official?"

"Popular, my dear Mr. Secretary. Everybody knows it by this time outside the Transvaal," replied the Baron,

"These accursed English are everywhere with their ships except on land."

smiling both outwardly and inwardly at the recollection of his own share in the negotiations.

"And that," he went on, turning to the Prince, "as I suppose your Highness, who knows everything else, is already aware, is why the German squadron did not enter the Bay at all, and why Russia had to pocket the affront and the loss that the British Admiral inflicted upon her. Her ships were in English waters, and she knew it."

"Ah," grunted the President again, "these accursed English are everywhere with their ships, except on land. God be thanked! Pretoria is far from the sea. It is a horrible thing that sea when you have no ships upon it. I hate it as I hate England itself.

"But this is idle talk," he went on, looking across at Prince Paul. "What say you, Prince, you who know the thoughts of all Europe? If we fight one great battle with these *rooineks* and crush them with the Lord's help, as we did at Amajuba, will your country and the other countries send ships to fight theirs and make the seaports open, so that we can send out our gold and diamonds and get what we buy with them back? Can you promise me that?"

"I can promise what I have promised already, your Honour," replied Prince Paul, bowing slightly towards the anxiously-angry old man, "but I cannot promise more. We cannot send our fleets to fight the English now in these far away waters, for if we did that our own coasts and seaports would be unprotected, and England, who is only waiting for her chance, would see it then, and strike us where we could not strike her back.

"Your Honour must remember that England has more ships than Russia, France, and Germany put together. But if your brave burghers can inflict a crushing defeat on the English in South Africa; if they can hoist your national flag in Cape Town and Maritzburg, then I can promise that Europe will compel England to acknowledge it, and that Africa shall be yours from sea to sea, every port and harbour from the Zambesi to Walfisch Bay.

"But if I may advise, let me urge you most strongly to strike hard and quickly. The loss of the Free State is bad, but it is better to stand by yourself than have a half-hearted ally, and I have no doubt that your friends in the South have by this time gained advantages sufficient to counterbalance the fall of Bloemfontein.

"Leave Carrington alone for the present, let your General Pretorius move his men from Vereening to Volkrust as quickly as may be. Carrington has the rail from Bloemfontein, and can strike him through that. But if he goes to Volksrust then Carrington must march across country, and this will give your forces time to unite. Then, on the scene of your former glorious triumphs, give battle with your whole strength to the enemy and crush him at one blow. Then turn and catch Carrington between your own forces and those of your friends in the south. If you can do that, Africa will be yours in a week."

"Allermachtij, Highness, that is it!" cried Uncle Paul, rising from his seat, and smiting his two great hands together. "We will do that. I will send the order to-night. Pretorius shall march on Volksrust, Joubert shall take supreme command, but I will go, too, myself. I am an old man, but I can still shoot straight for my people and the Land. Yes, we will fight another Amajuba, and we will fight it on the same day; and it shall be Armageddon, too, for the Lord will help His people, and put our feet on the necks of our enemies!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE FIGHT OF HEX RIVER.

As soon as Sir Charles Warren had completed his survey of the situation in Natal he returned in the *Rhodesia* to Cape Town to confer with General Goodenough and the two Admirals on the position of affairs in Cape Colony; and the following day—that is to say the 17th of February—news came in that a heavy force of Boers was advancing on Worcester, apparently with the intention of storming the Hex River Pass.

The whole of Cape Colony, with the exception of the coast-strip, might by this time be said to be at their disposal. In almost every battle that had been fought with the Loyalist garrisons and burgher forces they had managed to crush their enemies by weight of numbers, saving only in the cases of De Aar, Colesberg, and Norvals Pont, where, as has already been said, the garrison had been relieved through the agency of Captain Murray's armoured train.

There were fully fifty thousand of them under arms, and they were now in possession of all the strategic positions and considerable towns throughout the colony. In Cape Town itself there were still many who would rather have seen the Vierkleur flying over Government House than the Union Jack, and these managed to open and keep up correspondence with the armed rebels of the interior by means of a Kaffir post across the mountains.

It was through the treachery or capture of one of these that the authorities learnt of the march on Worcester, and the intention of the rebels to force the Hex River and Tulbagh passes. They had been joined by the Midland Commando, so that not less than twenty thousand men were advancing on Worcester and the Hex River.

Their motive was sufficiently plain. The landing of the Australians and Canadians had convinced them that as long as Cape Town remained in the hands of the Loyalists, reinforcements could be continually poured in from all parts of the Empire until the advantage of numbers must inevitably turn the other way. If, therefore, they could take and hold the three gates, so to speak, of the peninsula—Hex River, Tulbagh Pass, and Sir Lowry's Pass—then, even if they and their friends in the city could not take Cape Town itself, they could at least bar the roads by which the troops must march into the interior.

If they had not delayed this movement until a week later than it should have taken place, it is quite possible that, aided as it would have been by an insurrection within the town, it might have been successful, although at a frightful cost of life and property, for both Admiral Dale and General Goodenough were firmly resolved that they would fight to the last man, and, if necessary, turn the guns of the forts, and the ships on the city and lay it in ruins

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rather than give up to the rebels the great southern gateway of the Empire, and the Half-way House on the road to India.

But the prompt and generous, albeit somewhat mysterious, fashion in which Australia and Canada had come to the rescue, together with the news that Sir Charles Warren had arrived, added to the rumours that Mr. Cecil Rhodes and his associates were somewhere using their vast influence and wealth in raising forces to do the work which the Imperial Government, smitten with sudden and almost unaccountable paralysis, was unable to do, had very prompty put all thoughts of insurrection out of the prudent minds of those worthy citizens of Cape Town, the Paarl, Stellenbosch, Malmesbury, and Swellendam, who, while confident of overcoming the few English scattered through the Colony, had no stomach for tackling the thousands of bronzed, stalwart and soldierly men who had suddenly come from beyond the seas to help their brothers of the Flag.

Although, as has been said, Sir Charles Warren held no official position whatever, he could not have had a more enthusiastic reception in Cape Town if he had been the Governor himself. As the *Rhodesia*, flying the Union Jack and the Blue Ensign, steamed into the bay, she was greeted with a thunder of salutes from the warships and the forts. The yards of the fleet were manned, and the five-and-twenty thousand men who were by this time under arms in Cape Town turned out and lined the streets as the plainly-dressed, unassuming-looking man who was soon to hold the destinies of South Africa in his hand drove from the docks to the Royal Hotel.

He only remained there a few minutes, and then drove up to Government House. The effect of his presence was felt almost immediately. He had all his plans ready cut and dried by the time he landed.

The Natal authorities had practically placed themselves in his hands so far as the operations were concerned, and those of Cape Colony promptly did the same. Thus, though he would accept no title beyond that of military adviser to the two Governments, he was virtually Commander-in-Chief of the Loyalist forces.

It was for this, as well as for reinforcements, that both the civil and military authorities had been waiting. Like wise men, they recognised the necessity of union under a supreme head, and the guidance of a single brain, and it was no time to permit anything like personal jealousy or professional rivalry to cross the course of patriotic duty.

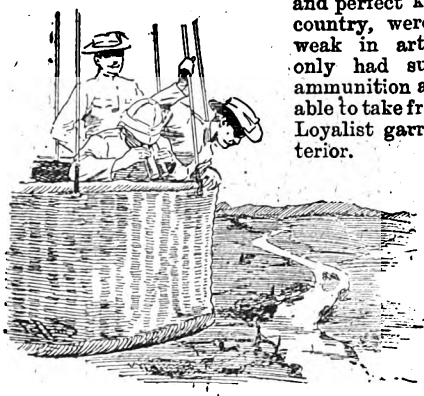
That night fifteen thousand men marched out northward in the direction of the Tulbagh Pass, and ten thousand more marched southward and eastward by the Sir Lowry's Pass on Caledon.

The attack on both positions began almost at the same time.

Both of these positions were occupied in force with artillery and machine-guns, just in time to check the advance of two great columns of rebel burghers, each about twenty thousand strong, which were marching from the east and north on the capital.

The next morning the rebel scouts saw every point of vantage commanding the only two practicable entrances to the Cape Peninsula held in force, and every way of approach commanded by artillery.

The Boers, though they had the advantage of numbers and perfect knowledge of the country, were comparatively weak in artillery, as they only had such guns and ammunition as they had been able to take from the defeated Loyalist garrisons in the interior.



Their glasses showed them thousands of advancing forms.

The attack on both positions began almost at the same time—about an hour after daybreak—but a very brief experience convinced the rebels not only that they were utterly overmatched in the way of artillery, but that the men who were pitted against them were very different shots to the unfortunate regulars whom they had brought down like deer at Amajuba and Lang's Nek.

Every bullet was fired with deliberate aim and purpose, and most of them found their billets, while not a man showed himself unnecessarily. In the accuracy of their shell and machine-gun fire, too, the Loyalists were vastly superior to them. The moment that any considerable body of them showed themselves within range, the shells from the nine and twelve-pounders began bursting in the midst of them, and after a very one-sided artillery duel of about an hour's duration, they abandoned all pretence at formation and fell back on their old methods of fighting, splitting up into small squads and groups, and taking such cover as the nature of the ground permitted.

In a few minutes nearly every man of the two great columns had disappeared, and then, dodging from stone to stone, and tree to tree, they kept up an irregular but incessant rifle fire on the Loyalist's positions, gradually working in closer and closer round.

Sir Charles Warren, who was commanding the Northern force, and General Goodenough, who was commanding that of the South, in accordance with their pre-arranged plans, now gave the order to cease firing and, not a little to the surprise of their men, ordered them to keep their cover and reserve their fire until they were absolutely certain of hitting.

The sudden cessation of the fusillade puzzled the Boers not a little. There was absolutely nothing but stones and trees for them to shoot at, and, as their supply of ammunition was limited, in comparison with the now practically inexhaustible supplies of the Loyalists, they had no mind to waste their bullets on these.

Then suddenly, while they were wondering how the fight was to be carried on without shooting, three captive balloons rose from the Loyalist positions which commanded the entrance to the Hex River Pass, and ascended to a height of about a thousand feet. These were on the slopes of the western end of the mountains where the railway curves round between them and the river.

The Boers had occupied Triangle Station, and had taken cover along the slopes on both sides of the railway; but so perfectly were they concealed that a casual observer would

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never have dreamt that an army of twenty thousand men was facing another of fifteen thousand within an area of two or three square miles.

But to the occupants of the balloon cars the spectacle was very different. All along the rugged mountain sides, and in the little gardens and orchards along the course of the river, their glasses showed them thousands of crouching, stealthy-advancing forms. The Boers had heard by this time of the strange and, as they honestly considered, unfair mode of fighting which had been employed by the Loyalists with such terrible effect in the North. They had heard how rockets and kites had been somehow employed to rain dynamite and mélinite down upon them from the sky, and how by these unholy means all the advantages which they had attained from their favourite mode of fighting had not only been destroyed but actually turned against them; and now they felt an instinctive apprehension that they were going to be taught one more lesson in the new warfare which these accursed *rooineks* with their devilish inventions were bringing to bear upon them.

The air seemed full of splinters of shells and flying fragments of rock.

They looked up at the little black specks in the sky as though they were evil demons of some sort about to launch some strange and unknown form of destruction upon them. Hundreds of them, acting under the same impulse, took, as they thought, most careful aim at them and fired. But of the thousands of bullets that went whistling up into the air not one touched the balloons, and this again was looked upon by the ignorant peasants as a sort of enchantment.

They could use their thumbs and fore-fingers as back-sights for their rifles and judge the distance of a man or a running buck to a foot, but there was no background to the balloons, and the range might have been anything from five to fifteen hundred yards for all they knew. Another thing they did not know was that if a score of the small-calibre bullets were to pierce the gas-envelope of a balloon it would scarcely make any difference, since the expansive force of the gas would close the rents as soon as they were made.

When the three balloons came to a standstill they were so stationed that they represented the three points of a triangle, each being from a mile to two thousand yards from the other. Presently the Boers saw brilliant sparks of white light shine out from each balloon, making it instantly invisible. For a few seconds these kept on alternately flashing and going out. Then they became permanent, and in a few seconds more a bright patch of light fell over a krantz, or natural rock-wall, on the side of one of the mountains, behind which between three and four hundred Boers were lying with their rifles at the ready waiting for a chance to shoot.

Almost the same instant puffs of grey-blue smoke rose from all the Loyalist positions, and a storm of shells from five-and-twenty field-pieces—seven, nine, and twelve-pounders—began to rain upon the krantz. Then the rebels learnt to their cost that they would have to adopt some other mode of fighting or submit to utter and inevitable defeat.

The natural fortifications with which so much of South Africa is covered are almost impregnable either to rifle-fire or storming by the charge.

It had been proved over and over again from Ingogo to Doornkop that to make a charge upon them when held by such marksmen as the Boers undoubtedly are simply meant annihilation or retreat.

But under shell-fire, especially when, as was the case in the Hex River Pass, directed from a superior elevation, or, as had been shown in the North, when exposed to overhead attack, these natural fortifications are nothing more nor less than death-traps.

The exploding shells break up the rocks, and every fragment of stone becomes, as it were, a piece of the shell itself.

This the Boers behind the krantz recognised before the bombardment had lasted a couple of minutes. The air about them seemed full of splinters of shells and flying fragments of rock.

Scores of them fell, fearfully mangled, at the first discharges; the rest took no thought as to the order of their going. They simply went as fast as their legs could carry or panic could drive them. But no sooner did they break cover than the shell fire stopped, and a hurricane of rifle and machine-gun bullets was poured upon them as they ran.

Meanwhile, two other patches of light had fallen from the balloons, one on an orchard down by the river, and the other on a rocky spur of a hill to the extreme right of the Loyalist position. Instantly the murderous shell fire broke out again, this time concentrated on the orchard, which in a few moments was a wilderness, blasted and shattered by the deadly mélinite, and strewn with the mangled bodies of those who had taken cover in it.

And again, as the survivors fled, the bullet-storm burst upon them, and still those tell-tale patches of light kept wandering about the slopes of the hills and the borders of the river-course; and wherever they rested the shells came shrieking and crashing into the midst of them, rending trees to shreds or splitting up rocks and hurling their fragments into the air, to fall back upon those who had taken shelter behind them. So, one after another, the hiding-places of the Boers were pointed out from the balloons to the artillerists in the batteries, and one after another they were shelled and made untenable.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Hard Hit.

Meanwhile exactly similar tactics had been employed against the Boer force that was attacking the Loyalist position at Caledon, which lies in a valley between the Hartebeest Mountains and one of their spurs. All of the heights had been more or less fortified during the preceding fortnight, and were now held by excellently served artillery. The consequence was that as soon as the balloon observation corps got to work, the effects were as astounding and disastrous to the rebel Boers as they were at the Hex River.

They were driven by the shell-fire from shelter after shelter, only to be exposed to the murderous storms of bullets which followed the cannonade.

While this was going on, a body of five thousand of the Australian Horse, under the guidance of a party of loyal Caledon burghers, had got round the mountain spur, and, so soon as the rebels had been driven from their shelter, and were retreating northward along the comparatively level ground, in order to fall back on Swellendam, which they had already occupied, troop after troop of horse swung out from behind the spur at a fast trot and then, breaking into a gallop, streamed across the wider end of the valley and caught the retreating Boers on flank and rear.

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They halted for a minute or two to re-form, and, during these few minutes, the cannonade from the hills began again, accompanied by heavy rifle and machine-gun fire from the front, and three or four well directed volleys from the flanking party.

Then the cannonade ceased again, and the Australians remounted and rode towards the main body of the bewildered and demoralised Boers. The trot quickened to a canter as the ground got better, and the canter broke into a gallop, and before they had time to run for shelter, the five thousand horse, with bayonets fixed to their long rifles, came thundering down upon them.

Some threw themselves from their horses flat down on the ground, and began to shoot as rapidly as they could load and fire. But this did not last long. The Australian Brigade came on so fast that, before the Boers had time to fire half-a-dozen shots apiece, they were on them, riding over them as they lay, or striking them down with the swift-stabbing bayonets as they rose and tried to remount their horses. Then came panic and utter rout, and, while the confusion was at its worst, another brigade of horse, three thousand strong, which had been sent by the road over the eastern bend of the mountain, debouched rapidly on to the left flank of the Boers, and cut off their only remaining way of escape.

Hunted out of their shelters, outflanked and hemmed in between the horse and the batteries, the Boers still fought stubbornly for nearly an hour as men will fight with halters round their necks even when all hope of victory is gone.

The slaughter among them had been frightful. So fearful indeed that, of the twenty thousand men who had attacked Caledon soon after daylight, hardly twelve thousand unwounded men remained.

Meanwhile more troops, including four hundred of the Cape Mounted Rifles, five hundred of the Cape Town Highlanders, a detachment of the Hampshire Regiment, the Royal Canadians, and two thousand five hundred of the lately enrolled volunteers, had been moving rapidly up from the extended base at Somerset West, and as each fresh troop arrived on the scene of action the rebels' chances even of escape grew more and more hopeless.

At length, shortly after midday and after an engagement of nearly five hours, General Goodenough felt himself strong enough to order a general advance and to strike the decisive blow.

Then the bugle-calls sang out, and column after column of men descended from the hills round Caledon and streamed through the pretty, tree-shaded little village and advanced to the attack under cover of the fire of the batteries. Then the gun-fire stopped, and the Loyalist foot regiments formed up and charged with the bayonet, while the cavalry, hovering on the two flanks and rear of the rebels, waited till the bayonets had done their work, to go in and complete the rout.

For a few minutes there was a bitter, bloody struggle. The Boers, well knowing that they had no claim to the ordinary conditions of surrender, fought with a dogged resolution, worthy of a better cause and a better fate. But yard by yard the lines of bayonets advanced, and yard by yard they were driven back upon the squadrons of horse waiting for the moment when they should break and run.

Then suddenly on the left flank there came from about half a mile away the dreaded sound of machine-gun firing. A detachment of the Cape Artillery had brought two galloping Maxims round by the road, and had opened fire on a rebel column about four thousand strong, which had faced about and was fighting its way to the eastward, and along the Swellendam road.

In less than five minutes the column broke up under the fearful bullet-storm and scattered. Instantly the Maxims stopped, and the Australian brigade saw its chance and charged, but before it got within striking distance, panic, utter and irretrievable, had overwhelmed the rebels. The psychological moment of the battle had come, and the Boers, as though at a given pre-arranged signal, flung down their rifles almost to a man and stood stolid and silent, waiting for the worst that might come to them. Here and there handkerchiefs were tied to rifle barrels and waved aloft in token of surrender.

Instantly the bugles pealed out the "Cease fire" all round the battlefield, and orderlies were sent out to find the Boer leaders with instructions to the effect that, as they were in the position, according to the laws of war, of rebels in revolt against lawful authority and not of recognised belligerents, the only alternative that the General could give them was unconditional surrender or a continuation of the battle to the point of annihilation.

The field-cornets in command of the five commandoes which made up the rebel force saw that, hard as the terms were, there were no better to be expected. They had taken up arms against the lawful government of their country, and by the law of nations their very lives were forfeit. The idea of continuing the fight was out of the question. They knew their men too well to entertain it for a moment, and so they gave up their rifles and revolvers to the orderlies and were taken into Caledon to the Alexandra Hotel, where General Goodenough had established his headquarters.

The interview was brief and anything but satisfactory. The General would make no terms whatever. All that he would promise was a fair trial by martial law at Cape Town, whither they would be immediately taken and lodged in the Castle. The rank and file, after giving up their arms, ammunition, and horses, would be permitted to return to their homes; but any of them afterwards found with arms in their hands would be hanged or shot as soon as caught.

All expostulations were cut short by a a curt order to

They were set to work to dig trenches.

the guard, which immediately closed round the prisoners and marched them off, surrounded by a hedge of bayonets.

The remains of the rebel army were then formed up on the battlefield into troops and their rifles and bandoliers taken from them, after which they were sternly cautioned that immediate death would be the fate of any of them who were caught either under arms again or in the commission of any act of violence.

Then, not a little to their disgust, they were set to work to dig trenches for the burial of the dead; their unwounded horses were driven into Caledon, and those unfit for further service shot and buried.

(To be continued.)

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "Lady Jezebel," by Fergus Hume, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. W. Lavers, of 31 Asylum Road, Peckham. Attempts for this week's prize must deal with FUNNY STORIES OF THE WAR, and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, May 28th. Post-cards only, please.

Bad Luck to the Boers.

AN officer who has just returned with the sick from South Africa was staying at the Hotel Cecil. Wishing to catch a train, he called for a cab and was quickly driven to Waterloo Station. Jumping out he handed the driver a shilling, the exact fare.

Evidently the cabby was not satisfied, for he held the coin in his hand, looked hard at it, and muttered something savagely to himself.

The officer turned round and demanded to know what he said.

"Bad luck to the Boers!" exclaimed the cabby.

"What have the Boers to do with you?" queried the officer.

"A good deal," replied the witty cabman, "for they have killed all the two-shilling officers, and there are only the shilling ones left now!" W. L.

What did the Minister Think?

A PARISH minister, when visiting his congregation, felt tired and hungry, and called upon an old maiden lady from whom he felt sure he could ask a cup of tea.

After making his request known he was taking a seat, when he observed three cats lapping milk under the table, and exclaimed:

"Miss Morris, are all these your cats?"

"My cats?" exclaimed the old lady, "na, faith na, only ane o' them; but I think a' the hungry brutes o' the parish come to me when they want onything to ate." W. F.

Nippers Wanted.

"IT says in this 'ere paper," remarked a patriotic collier to his wife, "that every volunteer that goes out to the front ought to be provided wi' a pair o' nippers for use. Now, that's wot I would call a clinkin' idea on the pairt o' somebody, Sal."

"Oh, is it?" cried Sal, looking up at him with an ominous glint in her eyes. "And what on earth do they want the nippers for, I should like to know?"

"Why, to help 'em into the trenches, lass. Them theer Boers cover everythink wi' barbed wire, an it ain't easy to climb o'er that stuff when ye've a gun in yer hands."

And the collier smiled at his superior knowledge.

"Happen not," snorted Sal, "but if ahr men can't clear a way through 't wi'out shovin' poor innocent bairns through first they ought to stop at whoam. They shan't take my Billy wi' em anyhow."

M. H.

An Aid to Memory.

JOHN, who was being constantly reproved for his forgetfulness, and who has just been severely reprimanded, looked up in his mother's face, and with a curious smile, as quite a new idea seemed to strike him, said;

"Mother, I know what I'll do; I'll eat some forget-me-not seeds, and then I'll remember."

E. L.

How to get Cigars for Nothing.

A YOUNG and energetic medical student, who is also a member of the Society for the Suppression of Tobacco Abuse, received orders to lecture in a small town of the provinces.

He gave a most horrible description of the many dreadful diseases that owed their origin to the abuse of the poisonous leaf. Nothing was omitted that could affect his audience.

After the peroration the poor provincials, quite stupefied, and in an agony of fear, at once gave up their stock of tobacco and cigars.

When the medico describes the scene, he quietly adds:

"I will never forget that triumph. I smoked for three months on the strength of it—without cost."

W. H.

His Free Confession.

THE following story, which hails from a North-country town, shows there are widely varying ideas as to what constitutes voluntary testimony on any subject.

"Did I understand you to say that this boy voluntarily confessed his share in the mischief done to the school-house?" asked the magistrate, addressing the determined-looking female parent of a small and dirty boy.

"Yes, sir, he did," the woman responded. "I just had to persuade him a little, and then he told me the whole thing voluntarily."

"How did you persuade him?" queried his worship.

"Well, first I gave him a good hiding," said the firm parent, "and then I put him to bed without any supper, and took his clothes away, and told him he'd stay in bed till he confessed what he'd done, if 'twas the rest of his days, and I should thrash him again in the morning. And in less than an hour he told me the whole story voluntarily."

A. M.

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He Didn't "Tumble."

The latest society craze for having the eye photographed by itself has penetrated to a provincial town, and has already caused a serious rupture between two loving sweethearts.

The girl, confident that her devoted Will would recognise her sweet blue orb at sight, sent him a photograph of it, and playfully wrote the following remarks on the back:

"Dear Will, I am anxious to have your candid opinion of a girl friend's character, and send herewith a photo of her eye. What do you think of it? Is it not a bold, bad, wicked eye; the eye of a naughty little flirt; the eye of a girl whom no one but a silly boy would dream of marrying?"

Next morning, while the dear girl was embroidering a tobacco-pouch with Will's initials his answer came to hand in an orange-coloured envelope:

"It is all that and more. Find a fresh chum.—Will."

The engagement is "off" now. R. A. H. G.

She Wanted Something New.

"George," she whispered, as she crept a little closer and placed her right auricular against his left-hand, second-storey vest pocket, "George, I want to ask you a question—a very important one: Why do you allude to papa as a pirate? Surely you must have some good reason for doing so."

"I have, indeed," responded George, with a dreamy, far-away look in his eyes; "pirates board people, you know, and I expect your father, if my plans work all right, to eventually board me."

"Oh, how clever you are, George! Do you know, I was awfully afraid you were going to get off that ancient chestnut about his being such an old freebooter; and I'm so glad you didn't, because all the fellows I've had have said that, and I was longing for something new."

And with a contented little sigh she inserted her north-west ear deeper than ever in George's upper left-hand vest pocket, and settled down for the evening.

W. T. Y.

Solomon Up to Date.

Readers of the "Arabian Nights" are familiar with the manner in which the Cadis dispensed justice with more regard to equity than to law, and it seems that instances of the same kind are of modern occurrence.

For example, not long ago a Turk, while repairing a roof, fell into the street upon a wealthy old man, who was killed, without any serious damage to the workman.

The son of the deceased caused the workman to be arrested, and taken before the Cadi, with whom he used all his influence to have the poor man condemned; and though the innocence of the labourer was clearly established, nothing could pacify the son but the law of retaliation. The Cadi stroked his beard, and then gravely decreed that the workman should be placed exactly upon the spot where the old man had stood.

"Now," said he to the son, "you will go on the roof of the house, fall down upon this man, and kill him if you can."

Of course, the son declined to do anything of the sort, and the case was dismissed. E. D. S.

Where He Erred.

In a northern town there is a wealthy man who gives freely to certain religious objects, but in other respects is a miser. He lives alone in a tumble-down house, and is seldom seen outside it. When he does go out, his garments give him very much the appearance of a tramp.

One day two friends of his youth met him in the town, and began to chaff him about his clothes.

"Your father," said one of them, "would never have worn a coat like that."

"That's just where you are wrong," was the answer; "it happens to have been my father's."

F. B.

Not Impressed.

In St. Paul's Cathedral a guide was showing an American gentleman round the tombs.

"That sir," said the man proudly, "is the tomb of the greatest naval hero Europe or the whole world ever knew—Lord Nelson. This marble sarcophagus weighs forty-two tons. Inside that is a steel receptacle weighing twelve tons, and inside of that is a leaden casket, hermetically sealed, weighing two tons, and inside of all is a mahogany coffin, holding the remains of the great hero."

He paused, evidently expecting his hearer to be greatly impressed, but he was disappointed.

"Well," said the American, after thinking awhile, "I guess you've got him fast. If he ever gets out of that, cable at my expense." G. B.

A Well-Chosen Illustration.

A bishop was explaining to a young curate that the whole parish was scandalised at his extravagant luxury, his extraordinary habits, and his horses. He added:

"Why do you drive your horses in tandem fashion?"

"But," answered the curate, "you also have two horses harnessed to your carriage. They are not the one before the other, it is true, but what difference can the position make?"

"It makes a very great difference," rejoined the bishop. "If I put my hands together before my face, it is an act of devotion and of reverence; but, if I put them before my face the one in front of the other, and if I spread them out, it is quite the reverse."

H. G. R.

Proved.

"You may say what you please about expensive clocks," said the funny man, "but it's a fact that I have got a cheap clock at home which I bought twenty years ago, placed on the mantleshelf, wound and set right, and from that day to this it has never varied so much as one minute."

"Indeed!" "Wonderful!" "Amazing!" came from the auditors of this remarkable statement.

"Do you really mean to say," asked one of them, "that the clock has never varied a minute all these years."

"Not a minute," returned the funny man. "The fact is I broke the mainspring in winding it, and it's never even ticked once since."

I. W. L.

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Living Up to Her Ideal.

ANNIE LUXMORE was a young lady of advanced views on the subject of feminine ability; her ideals were lofty, her education was of a high grade, her accomplishments many, her figure well formed, and her face pretty. That was a terse description of her by one of her acquaintances, and it was accurate and sufficient for most people, but for our purpose a little more explanation is necessary.

She was an only child. Her father had died when she was twelve, leaving a small income settled on his wife; his daughter had inherited his views on educational matters and his ideals, as well as his determination, and the result was that she set to work to complete her own education, with the small means at her command, after his death.

Although barely twenty-two, she had gained a B. A. degree at London University; she could paint and write, and was already gaining a name in the great Metropolis. She was regarded as a coming woman in literature and science; those who did not know her, pictured her as the worst of blue stockings, but as a matter of fact, she was domesticated and capable of the warmest affections.

Two years previous to the opening of this story the circumstances of the Luxmores had been rendered more easy by an addition to their family circles in the person of Miss Bertha Drew, a niece of Mrs. Luxmore. Her father, who had made a lot of money by fortunate speculation in mines, died rather suddenly; and Bertha, having now lost both her parents, went to reside with her aunt.

Her income was considerable and she was good natured; hence, she took it upon herself to make the modest residence of the Luxmores a little more pretentious and she defrayed the cost of many necessaries—the Luxmores would have called them luxuries—and outings or receptions out of her own pocket. She did this in such an unassuming fashion that even the acute susceptibilities of her cousin Annie were not wounded.

Annie Luxmore sat in an easy chair in her own room with a book lying in her lap, her hands resting on the arms of the chair, and a far away look in her eyes. She had been reading an essay on the beauty and nobility of self sacrifice, and she felt unusually stirred. Such an essay appealed very strongly to a young women of such elevated ideals; it was her desire to lead a life that should stand out from others as an example of nobleness of living, an example of a human being ever ready to stand aside at any cost to herself in order to benefit others. Her education had not robbed her entirely of romance; she longed to be a heroine and in various ways had tried to be one. But the real opportunity had never come to her; when she had been gratified by the thought that a chance had really come, it had turned out to be no chance at all from her point of view. The little services which these opportunities had enabled her to render were too unimportant to qualify her as a heroine, although they increased her reputation as a thoroughly good hearted woman among her friends and acquaintances. When would she have the longed-for opportunity for self-sacrifice?

Her reverie was interrupted by a gentle tap at the door, and in answer to her invitation to enter, Bertha Drew came into the room. She seated herself in a chair close to her cousin and remained silent.

"What is it, Bertha?" inquired Annie with a faint smile.

It was not often that Bertha remained as quiet as now, and Annie wondered with some amusement what had occurred to upset her cousin's usual high spirits.

"I hardly know how to explain, Annie," replied Bertha after a pause and with some show of restraint.

"What have you been reading?" she inquired suddenly, having observed the book lying on her cousin's lap.

"An essay on 'Self-Sacrifice' the beauty and nobility of it," was the answer. Her thoughts now turned back into the former channel, Annie's face became grave again.

"That's it!" Bertha's face lighted up with satisfaction, like that of one who sees a way out of a difficulty. "You are a believer in that—and I have come to ask it of you."

She spoke quickly, the colour mounting to her cheeks. Annie sat up in her chair and looked at her intently.

"Tell me exactly what you mean," demanded the B.A. in her quick, decided manner.

"I will."

Bertha spoke in the same hurried way; at first she avoided her cousin's gaze, but as she went on she turned her eyes direct to Annie and her tone became one of intreaty.

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"For six months Sidney Harrison, our cousin, has been paying visits here. His object, we cannot doubt it, is to win one of us. Until lately I have been unable to decide in my own mind which one it is; now I feel sure that it is you.

"Annie, I love Sydney with all the strength of my being. I do not know exactly your feelings towards him, but they cannot be stronger than mine. I see the prospect of losing that which alone will make life worth living for me; my money is as nothing compared with the possession of Sidney Harrison. Money brings but the false friendship of others, the pleasures that are like Dead Sea fruit. I have no ability, nothing else that will make life pleasant—as you have. Annie, do not take him from me! Be generous and make the sacrifice I ask—give up Sidney Harrison to me?"

There was a passionate ring in the appeal that told of the depth of feeling which was its motive, and Annie could not fail to be struck by it. Her cousin's countenance was quite transformed.

But the response to the appeal did not come at once; now that the longed-for opportunity for self-sacrifice had presented itself, Annie hesitated. It was hard, so hard, after all, to make a reply to the call! It had never seemed to her that it would be so difficult to become a heroine! She was asked to give up the man she loved—how was it possible?

"Is it fair to ask me to do that?" demanded Annie in a strained voice. "We are not all endowed in the same way; some have riches, others have ability, talent—call it what you will. Life has been easy for you; it has been a great struggle for me for years. With your wealth life in the future is one of pleasure and freedom from anxiety; if I have ability—as some say—yet I have to struggle for existence, for when my dear mother dies, her income ceases and I have to get my own living. My very talent will spoil my chances of marriage. Is it fair to ask this sacrifice of me; is not love as much to me as to you?"

Bertha was nonplussed for a moment. Then she continued:

"I am not discussing the question of fairness; I am appealing to your generosity, I am asking you to make a sacrifice—to perform an act which you have always lauded. Your future can cause you no real anxiety; you are too clever not to succeed. You have a grand future before you; I have nothing."

Again there was silence, but the expression on Annie's face made it clear to Bertha that she had struck the right note in appealing to the other's generosity and her idea of standing aside for the benefit of others. She pushed her appeal a little farther, feeling more confident of success.

"Sidney is clever, but he lacks the means that are absolutely necessary if he would advance in his profession. I can give him that which he must have. Not that he will sell himself for money, far from it. You can with one stroke live up to your ideal and help the man you love to fame and fortune."

"But—suppose Sidney—does not love you?" Annie asked in jerky tones.

"If he does not propose to me, then your are at liberty, you are free from your promise. But if you were out of the way, I am confident that I should win him."

A long silence followed. Annie buried her face in her hands, and Bertha watched her with intense anxiety. At last the inward struggle was over. Annie removed her hands, arose from her seat and said calmly:

"Be it so. I will take up the holiday appointment which was offered to me yesterday, and will go away for three months. If in that time matters are not consummated, I—my——"

* * * * *

Three months later, when Annie Luxmore returned, matters were consummated; the marriage of Sidney Harrison with Bertha Drew was announced and the ceremony fixed to take place within one month.

Everyone said that Mr. and Mrs. Harrison had made a success of marriage; the lady certainly showed that she was devotedly attached to her husband; in fact, some people said that she showed this a little too much, but Annie Luxmore and her mother were of opinion that it was the other way about and that Mr. Harrison's affection for his wife was rather too demonstrative.

It was certainly the fact that when his cousin was staying with them—which happened at frequent intervals—Sidney seemed to delight in proving to Annie that he was very deeply in love with the woman whom he had married. Annie and he had much in common and many pleasant hours were spent by them in discussing problems of a nature that had not much interest for Bertha. The last named gave no indication that she either disliked these conversations between her husband and her cousin or that she was in any way jealous.

Sidney had proved himself so attached to her that she felt that there was no cause for uneasiness in view of former circumstances.

Annie became more and more convinced as the time went by that she had done the right thing by responding to Bertha's appeal; it was a mistake, she believed, to suppose that Sidney had cared for her more than for Bertha. He never missed an opportunity of indicating to Annie how deeply he loved his wife. It cost her a pang to admit it, but it seemed clear now that she had not won his affection at all.

* * * * *

Five years went past. Harrison was rising rapidly thanks to his wife's fortune; Annie Luxmore was also making headway and was still unmarried.

It was early in September, and the three cousins were enjoying a holiday together in the Alpine district; Annie had been invited to accompany Mr. and Mrs. Harrison and her mother having urged her to accept the invitation, she decided to go with them.

It was by no means their first experience of mountain climbing, and the stay had been a most enjoyable one; they were to return to England at the end of another three days, and as a concluding expedition—and probably fired with the prevailing desire to make a record of some kind—they had decided to make an ascent by themselves, without the assistance of guides.

In Alpine climbing it is the unexpected that happens. There was no evidence of any danger and the three climbers—tied together, with Sidney in the centre—were elated with the ease with which they accomplished their task, when Bertha, who was taking the lead, slipped.

There was a cry, a rattle of stones and the rustle of garments as the three fell and slid down the incline towards a precipice. Sidney and Annie retained enough self-possession to make clutches at objects which they passed, but their efforts were unavailing. They gave themselves up for lost and Sidney was breathing a prayer on behalf of his two children when he felt himself caught by something which he clasped with the frantic despair of a man face to face with death.

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His fall had been arrested by a projecting and slightly raised point of rock on the very edge of the precipice, and he found himself held tightly against this piece of rock by the weight of the two women who were now suspended in the air, one on each side of the point, by the rope which was attached to the waists of all three. He was lying face downwards, looking into the face of Annie, his wife being invisible to him.

"Safe!" cried Annie. "If you can pull me up two or three feet, Sidney, I can grip the rock and pull myself up beside you. I have not forgotten my gymnastic exercises. Then we can pull up Bertha, who has fainted," She spoke almost cheerfully, as though assured that she had escaped a terrible fate.

"I can't!" gasped Sydney. "The weight of you two is pinning me tight and I am unable to move. I can only hold on. If there had been only one of you, I might have managed it, but——"

He was never a very strong man, having been studious rather than athletic. Annie knew this and recognised the truth of his words; her face fell.

"I'll try and pull myself up, hand over hand," she said.

She began her effort, but a cry from Sidney made her stop. Her movement was dragging him to the edge of the projection and pulling him over one side. It needed no second glance to assure her that the only chance of safety was for Sydney to reach higher ground; this he might most—probably would—be able to do if the weight were decreased, but with the burden of both women it was impossible for him to help himself and an oscillation had the effect just described.

Unless help came, one of the suspended women must give way in order to save the other members of the party; help was not to be expected, and the chance of safety for two would be gone unless the burden was lightened.

"Then one of us women must make a sacrifice just as it happened five years ago," said Annie with calm resignation.

"What sacrifice?" inquired Sidney, aroused by the tone and the words.

"It looks like death for Bertha or me, so why should I not speak out? Five years ago Bertha asked me to give you up to her. I loved you, but she appealed to my noblest instincts, to my belief in my ideals of generosity and self-sacrifice. I went away and left the field clear for her. I am glad, for I made you both happy. It is now again my duty to give way, is it not?"

There was a mixture of resignation and rebellion in her tone; she felt that it was her duty, yet how cruel it was!

"Why did I not know this?" Sidney's tone was almost fierce in his anger. "Was it fair to me to do that? Did you not think that I was to be considered? You thought only of yourself, only of your ideals, and you left me, left the one who loved you better than any woman on earth!"

"But you were far happier with her!" gasped Annie. "You always told me how happy you were."

"That was to deceive you. I thought you had treated me lightly and I married Bertha. Was it likely that I should allow you to think that I cared for you when I thought that you had behaved so coolly to me? Oh, why did you do this thing!"

"It is your turn to choose now," said Annie. In the revulsion of feeling caused by this revelation, and the excitement of the position, she scarcely knew what she was asking of him. "Which shall it be to give way? Shall I cut the rope and leave you to save Bertha, or will you cut the rope on the other side?"

"It is not fair to ask me to choose," cried Sidney wildly. "She is my wife, the mother of my children; I have learnt to love her during these five years. Oh, heaven! How can I make the choice. I love you—have always loved you; but I love her—she is my wife."

"Choose!" The word came in a hard tone.

"I cannot!"

"You love her," said Annie. "Then it is for me to repeat the act of five years ago."

He saw her, as in a dream, take her axe from her belt, raise it with calm determination and strike at the rope. He gripped the rock with all his might; he felt his burden suddenly become lighter, and he knew that Annie had kept her word.

* * * * *

The newspapers were full of the dreadful Alpine accident, and the miraculous escape of two of the climbers owing to the rope having given way with one of the party, whose body was afterwards found in the valley beneath. They described the efforts made by the man to drag himself and his senseless burden to a higher level, a task which he successfully accomplished after immense trouble and agonising labour.

* * * * *

A day later, the newspapers contained further thrilling details of the accident from the lips of Mr. Sidney Harrison, from which it appeared that the safety of himself and his wife was due to the heroism of the third member of the little party—that the rope had not given way but had been deliberately cut.

G. Day.

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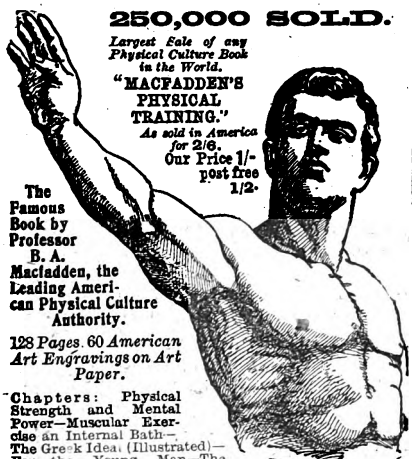

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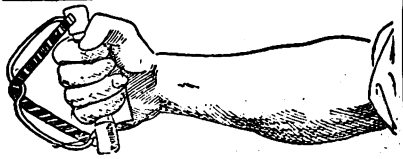

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Eczema affecting children is frequently caused by the use of strong soaps, and by wearing underclothing from which the soap or soda has been imperfectly removed. Fevers, teething, and a diet containing too much sugar are also said to be frequent causes.

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The Coat Tail Pocket.

Mr. Withers' recent experience of the incompatibility of the coat-tail pocket and glass bottles was very painful and embarrassing. He had returned home after a brief visit to London, and had brought with him as a present for Miss Wilson—to whom he was betrothed—a bottle of that remarkable cement which is sold by pavement merchants, and which is by them represented as being much stronger than wrought iron.

It had occurred to him that this cement would be a very nice thing to have in his future house, since, with it, all sorts of broken china and glass could be mended. On the evening of his arrival home, he put the cement-bottle in his coat-tail pocket, and called on Miss Wilson, intending to offer it to her as soon as he entered the house.

Mr. Withers was ardently attached to the young lady, and when he saw her before him, he not unnaturally forgot all about such merely earthly matters as cement.

The old people welcomed him politely, and, after a few moments of conversation, withdrew with a discretion which it is to be wished that all old people would emulate. Being of a frugal mind. Mr. Withers promptly lowered the gas, and proceeded to make himself at home.

The bottle was a stout one, and would perhaps have withstood any ordinary pressure, but as Miss Wilson weighed fully one hundred and forty pounds, and as the back of the small rocking-chair was of hard wood, it is not strange that the bottle yielded.

Mr. Withers was so much interested in the weather and other subjects, such as usually absorb the attention of young men in his position, that he did not notice the breaking of the glass, and it was not until an hour later that a false alarm of father in the front hall induced Miss Wilson to hie quickly to the sofa, and suggested to Mr. Withers the advisability of turning up the gas.

The cement had done its work, and Mr. Withers did not get up to attend to the light, but requested the young lady to discharge this duty for him. She did so, and then noticed his pained and preoccupied expression.

To her anxious inquiries he admitted that he felt a little faint and would like a glass of water. Miss Wilson hurriedly went for the water, reproaching herself for being so heavy, and accusing herself of selfishness and want of consideration.

In her absence, the young man made superhuman efforts to wrench himself loose, but the cement refused to yield. When Miss Wilson returned with the glass of water, he looked so much worse that she was really frightened, and he was compelled to tell her the real state of the case.

She was a practical person, and timidly suggested that if she were to call pa, "perhaps pa might be able to free you;" but Mr. Withers said no; he could not bear the mortification of being found in such a situation by any father. It was finally agreed that he should wait until a late hour, and should take the chair home with him.

This was accordingly done, and had not the unfortunate young man been arrested by a local constable, who only discharged him, when a severe test proved that his possession of the chair was purely involuntary, his misfortune might never have become generally known.

When disasters such as this are liable to happen to the wearers of coat-tail pockets, it becomes doubtful whether they are not altogether too hazardous for for general use. In fact, good authorities maintain that the coat-tail pocket is positively detrimental, and that an earnest and united effort should be made to secure its extirpation.

W. K.

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From this it would seem that for an up-to-date knowledge of the world's doings the only thing essential is to spend **ONE HA'PENNY A DAY** on the

Daily Express

Aside from the news, the contents of the "DAILY EXPRESS" are more varied, and, if we may say so, more interesting than those of any other paper. This is the opinion of

THIRTEEN THOUSAND FOUR HUNDRED AND SEVEN

readers who have been sufficiently well impressed by the paper to take the trouble to wire or write and send it their congratulations.

Excluding the phenomenal sale of its first number, the average daily circulation of the "DAILY EXPRESS" to date has been

OVER 300,000 COPIES.

The leading papers of the United States, France, Germany, Russia, Austria, and Italy have professed themselves "amazed at the enterprise of the 'DAILY EXPRESS,' which, in the course of an existence of a few days, twice electrified the world with interviews with monarchs, full of the highest political and international significance."

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THE BRAIN GYMNASIUM

IN these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, SHORT STORIES, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by first post on Monday, June 4th, 1900.

No. 124.

WHAT is the difference between six dozen dozen and half-a-dozen dozen?

No. 125.

FORM three words of the same length from the following letters and place them so that, read vertically, five other words are given.

A A A E E E E G G L L L N S T.

No. 126.

A PARTY of seven students, with more wit than money, agreed with a restaurant keeper to pay him £20 per head so soon as they should have occupied all possible positions at the table, he undertaking to entertain them daily in the meantime with a dinner costing half-a-crown a head. How much did the host make or lose by the transaction?

No. 127.

FORM the name of an island with the first and third letters of the following:

A FOOD.
A WEIGHT.
AN ANIMAL.
A BAG.
A MEASURE OF LAND.

No. 128.

LLSSL, STRPS SH S SLHW
HTB; ⊢ MSSLDNRFSSLHW
H; HCMSSL, YNMSSL.. WH

INSERT vowels between the above consonants so that by reading from the end to the beginning an old proverb will be given.

No. 129.

FROM each of the words given below, select two consecutive letters; arrange the pairs in order, place the letter "A" in front of them, and the name of a British possession in the Atlantic will be given.

SIGN—HAND—SCAR—LATE—BONE—THEN—LISP.

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Nos. 100 to 105.

THE prize of £2 has been awarded this week to Mr. B. Martin, of "Rhianva," Rock Avenue, New Brompton, whose solution was the first correct one dealt with.

Each of the following has been awarded a copy of "Keepers of the People," by Edgar Jephson:

Miss A. Scott, Ryde Lodge, St. Mildred's Road, Ramsgate.
George Fraser, 4 Dawson Place, Morneth.
Miss Helen Warner, Park House, Ifield, Crawley.
Mrs. H. Higgs, 11 Ravenscroft Park, Barnet.
H. Quinton, "Eaglesmere," Tennyson Road, Portswood Park, Southampton.
W. Jones, 57 Limes Road, Croydon.
Miss Eleanor Whitcher, 81 The Drive, Hove, Sussex.
James Braidwood, 7 Sciennes, Edinburgh.
F. Culyer, 14 Chalford Road, West Norwood.
Miss E. Marshall, Kingston-by-the-Sea, Brighton.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES.

Nos. 106 to 111.

No. 106. The same letters form "double as long" and "also begun old."

No. 107. So appears Pears Soap.

No. 108. TIM - BUC - TOO.

No. 109. "A rolling stone gathers no moss."

No. 110. "The Siege of Corinth"; "Byron"; "Childe Harold."

No. 111. Fullstop.

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With the least Trouble

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In his town.

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SHORT STORIES

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN

No. 596. FOR WEEK ENDING JUNE 2ND, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

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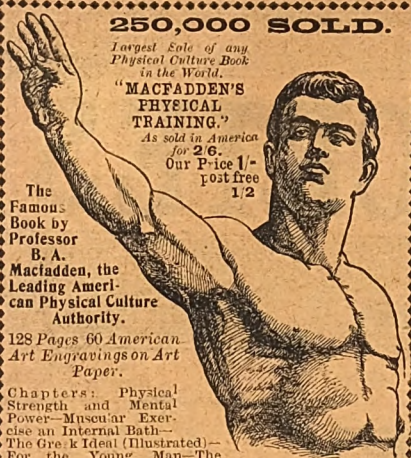

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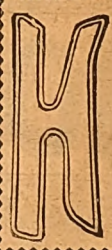

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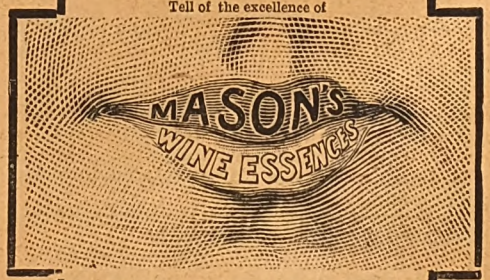

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REPORTED MISSING.

On the morrow, another division was to sail for the seat of war, and Society was busy lionising its officers.

Many of the houses in the West-end were *en fête*; and of these, No. 40 Wemyss Square was a conspicuous example. Indeed, for the number of well-appointed carriages rolling to and from its crimson-carpeted, awning-covered entrance, it took the palm. In fact, all fashionable London seemed to be gathered within its reception rooms. The reason of this unwonted festivity in the Moseley household was not far to seek—at least, not to those who were aware that the daughter of the house, Lady Cecile, was the affianced wife of Captain Granville Berkeley, D.S.O.; for Captain Granville Berkeley, along with his regiment, the 13th Hussars, was under orders for active service.

The Earl of Moseley's circumstances were by no means rosy, and certainly did not admit of such lavish entertaining. But Society has its duties, and the noble Earl considered that on this, the eve of his daughter's *fiancé's* departure, the unloosening of his purse strings was incumbent upon him.

Having arrived at this conclusion, the peer, who was also a widower, rashly gave to Lady Cecile *carte blanche*, and a ball was the immediate result, which in its magnificence was the event of the London season.

There was another result later, the lengthened retirement of Lord Moseley and his daughter to an obscure hamlet in Southern Italy, where living was cheap, and entertaining unnecessary.

But of this, Society knew nothing, other than the information conveyed by a paragraph in the daily paper, to the effect that the Earl of Moseley and his daughter, Lady Cecile, had left town, for an extensive tour on the Continent. But this by the way.

Society accepted Lord Moseley's hospitality, approving volubly of the peer's munificence in public; while in private, it, vulgarly speaking, winked the other eye, making more than a passing reference to the dangers of the campaign, and the fact, which had somehow leaked out, that Captain Berkeley had made a will, bequeathing the whole of his fortune, some seven thousand pounds a year, to Lady Cecile.

This was a solatium which, Society was unkind enough to assert, Lady Cecile would find a more than sufficient compensation, should a Boer bullet find its billet in a vital portion of her lover's anatomy.

Whether Society was right in this somewhat uncharitable surmise remained to be proved.

Certainly, as the strains of a dreamy waltz died away, and Captain Berkeley with his *fiancé*, a tall, slender figure, resting lightly upon his arm, elbowed his way through the fashionable crowd towards the conservatory, the lady's expression was not one of inconsolable grief. Her clear-cut, high-bred features, as classically perfect as those of a Greek statue, were very pale; but then Lady Cecile was always so.

True, there was a certain tightness about the rather thin lips, a constraint of the smile, which she bestowed round and about her as they passed, a contraction of the white forehead, where the faintly outlined blue arteries in the temples seemed to be throbbing somewhat abnormally, which might have indicated a mind not quite at ease; but certainly not the aspect of a girl, however unemotionably high-bred, whose lover was about to say a perhaps last farewell. The contrast between her own and Captain Berkeley's looks was very great. He made no effort to conceal his discomposure.

The strong, sun-burnt face had paled under its Indian tan; the grey-blue eyes, which had often looked unflinchingly at death, amid the wild passes of the Chitral, on the burning sands of Egypt and in a dozen out-of-the-way spots of the earth during his fifteen years' experience of England's little wars, bore a sad wistful expression. The well-shaped head, with the hair thinning early here and there, for he was hardly thirty-five, the white touches of Time's fingers, lacked the usual erectness of carriage.

His depression was very evident. At least so thought the Hon. Neville Oliphant, a sympathetic sub of the captain's regiment, who whispered to his companion:

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"By Jove! Look at 'Berk' of Ours. He's feeling beastly bad over saying 'Good-bye' to La Belle Cecile. I never thought he was so hard hit."

The girl upon the sub's arm glanced towards those of whom he spoke.

"Yes!" she replied, "you are right. He does seem upset, poor fellow. But what of Cecile? Do Lord Byron's words:

"By those who deepest feel, is ill-expressed,
The indistinctness of the suffering breast,

apply to her, do you think?"

The sub shook his head doubtfully.

"I don't know," he said, taking a long glance at the pair, who had paused for a moment at the door. "I don't even feel sure that Byron was right, when I see the depths of expression in 'Berk's' eyes. But I do know this, that I'd like the girl I was spoons over, to look a little different to-night."

"You forget," returned the girl, "that it is not good form to show emotion, and Cecile is nothing if not good form."

"Hang good form!" exclaimed the warm-hearted sub hotly. "I beg your pardon, but I hate that rot, which teaches us that it is not *bon ton* to show we've got a heart. The Indian stoicism I used to read about, when I was a youngster, which enabled a chappie to be roasted over a slow fire without yelling, is all very well—in the Indian chappie. But among us, when I see that sort of thing, I always wonder whether the being roasted over a slow fire hurts."

With which lucid exposition of his views the Hon. Neville Oliphant led his fair companion to the refreshment room, while the objects of their conversation disappeared in turn, in the direction of the conservatory.

* * * * *

Society had many correspondents at the front, and for thrilling incidents and unpublished side lights, sent by the officers engaged, it forwarded in return the gossip of its drawing-rooms.

Of Society's most assiduous correspondents, Captain the Hon. Neville Oliphant—formerly a sub in Berkeley's regiment—now three steps advanced in rank, vice 2nd Lieutenants Maurice Drew and Brandon Gerrard, killed in action, and Captain Granville Berkeley, reported missing—was one.

As a reward for many a lengthy epistle "home," the military post bag, one morning, brought him a bulky letter from Lady Janet Ray—an aunt by marriage, and a Society leader by vocation.

He was in his tent when the post arrived, and breaking the seal, he sat himself down to enjoy the luxury of five minutes forgetfulness of things military and African.

But he was doomed to disappointment.

He had barely scanned the first page, when a bugle called him to arms; and much to his disgust—for it was raining heavily, and he had a rooted objection to a wet jacket—he had to thrust the letter into his sabretache, don his sword and service revolver, and hurry without.

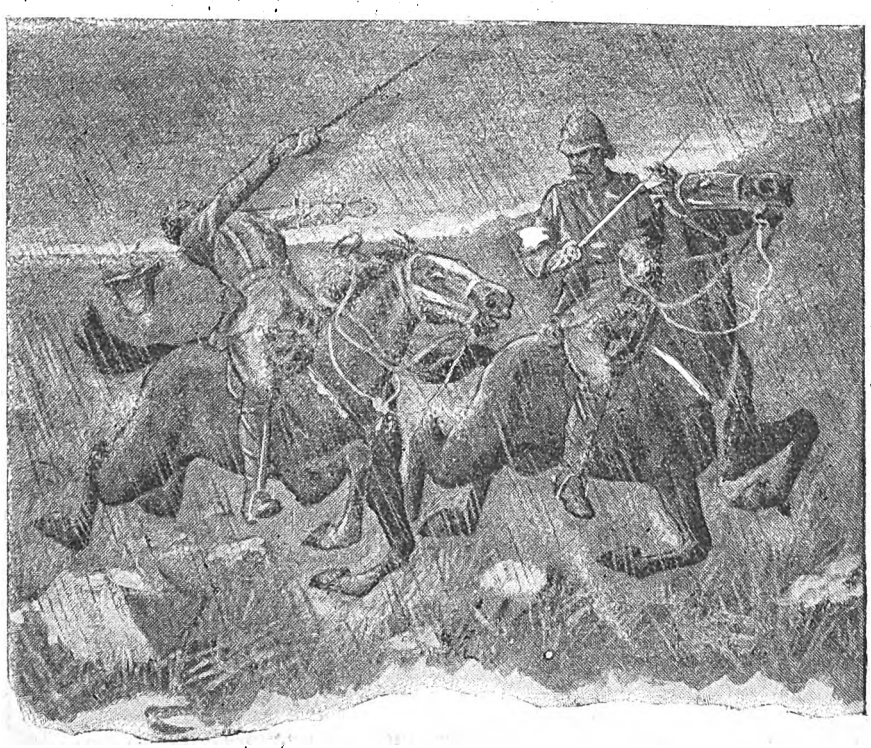
Ten minutes later, he found himself, along with his regiment, covering an advance in force upon a rugged kopje, behind which the Boer laagers—which they had received instructions to take at all costs—lay.

"Beastly unpleasant, 'pon honour, on a morning like this, and shows an uncommon disregard, on the General's part, of one's comfort," grumbled the Hon. Neville to a brother officer, as they trotted along through a very torrent of rain, with the patter, patter of which was mingled now and again the chug, chug of a flying bullet, or the scream of a shell, with which the enemy greeted their advance.

"This is just the sort of beastly weather I always take cold in, and my stock of handkerchiefs is running short, and to make matters worse, our Sawbones tells me the quinine is ditto. I can quite see the necessity of ousting these beggars out of their position, but we could just as well have waited for a fine day."

Receiving no reply, but an indulgent laugh from his companion, he went on:

"I was just in the midst of reading a most interesting letter too, from my respected aunt. She writes, among a host



Captain Oliphant turned in his saddle to see his companion drop his reins.

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of other things, that old Moseley's daughter—you know the girl I mean, the marble statue sort of beauty, who was engaged to Berkeley——Eh? What?"

A reply in the affirmative. A sharp 'spat,' a choking, sobbing cry, and Captain Oliphant had turned sharply in his saddle in time to see his companion drop his reins, and as his startled horse sprang forward, fall headlong from the saddle, with a bullet hole in his throat.

The young officer's face paled for a moment, then, as the bullets from the now retreating Boers began to hurtle around him, emptying the saddles right and left, it became set and resolute.

"Poor Granby! Another of us gone," he muttered, then aloud, as the men for a moment wavered under the deadly hail, "Steady, men, steady! Keep your heads, and," gritting his teeth hard, "Please God, we'll give these brutes cold steel in exchange for nickle and lead soon."

When Captain Oliphant found an opportunity to revert to his aristocratic relative's letter, he had kept his word. The Boers had had their fill of cold steel, and been driven headlong from their position; while he was within the canvas walls of their field hospital, under the hands of his regimental surgeon. Around him were numbers of the enemy's wounded, left to the mercy of the victors; while a constant stream of his own countrymen was pouring in, brought by the bearers.

They paused at the cot of the man.

Nonchalant as ever, with a cigar between his teeth, the young captain sat, undergoing the dressing of an ugly bullet wound in his left arm—the pain of which was in no way impeding his garrulity.

"Yes, it was a fairly warmish time before we got at 'em," he was saying, in reply to the doctor's reference to the number of wounded being brought in. "They hammered us unmercifully before we'd worked round to the rear of the kopje—Creusots, Hotchkiss, Maxims, and Mausers, all going at once. Never felt in such a dickens of a funk. It's a fact, 'pon honour!" as the surgeon gave an incredulous laugh. "Felt inclined to cut and run; should, too, if it hadn't been such a beastly example to show the men. They shot down poor Granby just as I was in the midst of telling him some news I'd heard about that Moseley girl, whom Berkeley of Ours, was spoons on. That made me wild, don't you know, and I think I ran amok among 'em, and the men followed. Anyway, I don't remember much about it, except that I slashed and cut right and left, and was just going to run a big, bearded chap through, when he held up a white handkerchief and asked for quarter. Then as I dropped my sword, the ungrateful beggar shot me in the shoulder, and here I am!"

"I wonder what became of Berkeley," said the surgeon abruptly. "Somehow I've an idea he's still alive."

Oliphant shook his head.

"I don't think so," he observed, "though I'd like to, for it would serve the fair Moseley right."

The surgeon, giving the last turn to the bandage, paused and looked up inquiringly.

Oliphant went on:

"You remember that fellow Trebova, the man who came a cropper over the French horse, at Epsom last year. I always had an idea that he was first favourite, and that it was only poor 'Berk's' banking account that put Trebova out of the running. Well, it seems I was right, too, for as I was telling Granby, they're entering for the matrimonial stakes in company after all."

"Wasn't there a report that Berkeley had made a will in the Moseley's favour?" inquired the surgeon.

"There was—and it is true. In the event of his death, she will inherit estates worth a cool seven thousand a year!"

"Hum! And on the strength of this prospective windfall, she and Trebova are marrying?"

"Exactly! The mercenary jade!" exclaimed Oliphant savagely, "and for that reason alone, I hope 'Berk' will turn up; though, poor chap, I'm inclined to think he would have preferred a bullet in the heart, rather than to have heard the news."

"Good Lord! What's the matter with that fellow?"

A suppressed groan from a cot close at hand, had broken in upon their conversation, causing both doctor and patient to look up with a start.

The surgeon—more inured to suffering—gave but a hurried glance at the occupant of the cot, and muttering something about a man in delirium, in response to a call from without, hurried away.

Captain Oliphant looked curiously towards the sufferer, for swathed in surgical bandages as he was

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ragged and unkempt as was the heavy beard covering his chin—there was something in the man's face strangely familiar—something which reminded him of Granville Berkeley.

The man at the same moment turned over, wearily, and buried his face in the pillow, appearing to dose.

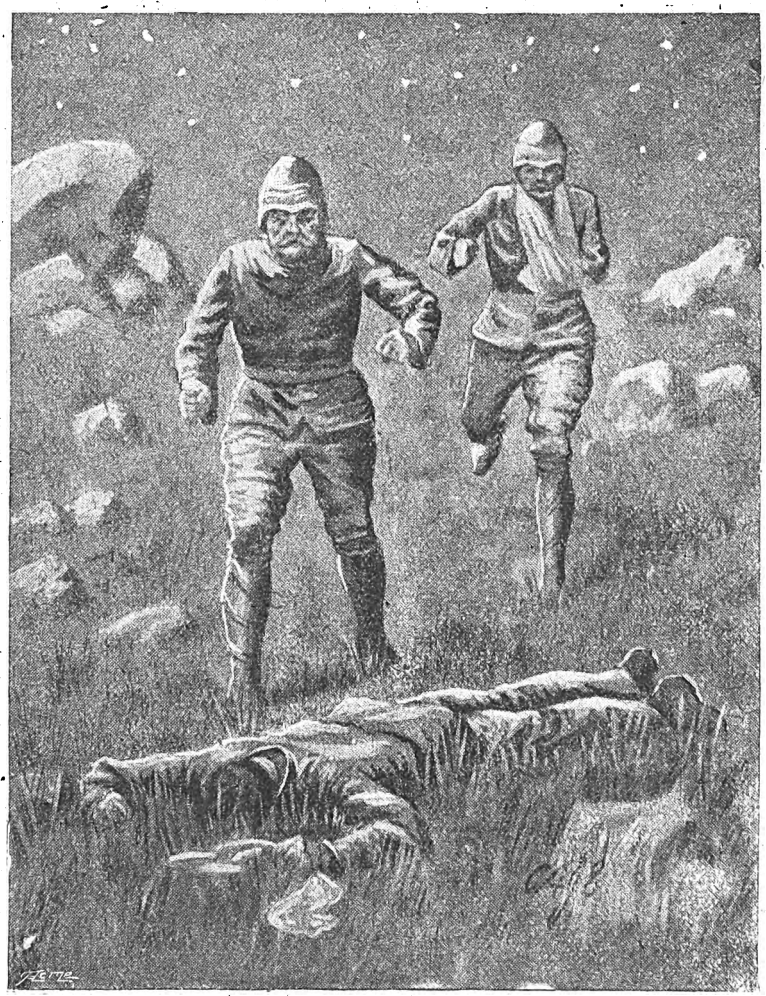
The movement was natural enough, but the young officer had caught a swift glance from a pair of grey-blue eyes, the pathos of whose expression carried his memory irresistibly back to the house in Wemyss Square — to the evening of the Moseley ball.

He passed his hand across his eyes, to convince himself he was not dreaming.

The man had the appearance of an Afrikander—lay in the midst of Afrikanders—the Boer wounded left behind in their hurried flight.

How was it possible that it could be Granville Berkeley?

Yet after all, the man was different from the rest—the small, well-shaped head, the refinement of the features, which neither sickness nor neglect had obliterated, the aristocratic hand, which rested on the coverlet — all recalled the missing soldier. But "Berk" and he had always been such close friends, that it seemed impossible that—if Berkeley it were—he should refuse to make himself known.



Yet not till the bright African moon rose did they find him lying face downwards.

Oliphant could not rest, however, until he had spoken to him.

"I beg pardon!" he said, leaning over the cot, "but I think you and I have met before. Your face seems very familiar, don't you know! I may be mistaken of course, but—— Oh, dash it all!"—with an eager burst—"aren't you 'Berk' of Ours?"

No answer for a moment. Scarcely a sign that his words had been heard, except that the colour crept faintly up into the man's wan cheeks.

Then, as the question was repeated, the fever-cracked lips opened, and a few words of unintelligible Dutch issued from the man's throat.

Faugh! It was a Boer then, after all, and with a hasty apology, in execrable German, which he had an idea was perfectly intelligible to everyone of Teutonic origin, and inwardly cursing himself for an imaginative ass, Captain Oliphant walked disgustedly away.

Still he could not shake off the impression, the man's face haunted him, and hours later, when he again met the surgeon who had dressed his wound, he spoke of the injured Boer's likeness to their missing comrade. The doctor heard him in silence, a puzzled look growing on his face the while. Then with a gesture to Oliphant to follow, he hurried in the direction of the Field hospital.

Making their way through the rows of sufferers, they paused at the cot of the man, of whom they had spoken. It was empty! The man was no longer there!

"Gone, by Heaven!" exclaimed the doctor, staring down in amazement. "Why?"

"Why?" echoed Oliphant, "because he found the coast clear for a moment, I suppose, and had no desire to remain a prisoner in our hands."

"The man was no Boer, depend upon it," returned the surgeon, gravely, "though if he should be whom I suspect, why he should have risked his life by leaving his cot, is a mystery. Listen!" as Oliphant turned, open-mouthed, for an explanation. "The principal Boer surgeon, who was absent, when we took their position, returned a while since to look after his wounded. He spoke to one of my sergeants about this man. He was, so he said, an Englishman, and he believed an officer, whom they had recently discovered—suffering from the effects of a bullet wound in the skull—in the house of a Dutch farmer, loyal to the British.

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"The man, so it appeared, had wandered to the farm, some weeks since, in an almost dying condition. He had, so the farmer gathered from his conversation, which was incoherent in the extreme, been wounded in the battle of Rooifontein, which had taken place the night previously."

"And after which Berkeley was reported missing," ejaculated Oliphant.

"Exactly! He was delirious with the fever of his wound, and his tunic was missing; so there were no means of identifying him, or knowing his rank. It was sufficient, however, to the good peasants, that he was an Englishman, and they gave him shelter, intending when his wound was healed, to assist him back to our lines. To remove the bullet though was beyond their simple skill, consequently, as there was some pressure on the brain, the poor fellow remained in a state of semi-unconsciousness, to the moment when his presence was discovered by the enemy.

"Imagining him to be of some consequence among us, the Boers brought him here, and after a most dangerous operation, the bullet was safely extracted and he was now in a fair way of recovery.

"Since the operation," continued the surgeon, "we have pushed the enemy so hard, and their casualties have been so numerous, that no one among them has had time or opportunity to question the man as to his name and rank."

"It's 'Berk,' I'll swear it!" said Oliphant, a troubled look gathering on his boyish face.

"I should say so, too, if I could understand his having any reason for not making himself known to you."

"Heavens, man! Can't you see that to a quixotic man like Granville Berkeley, we gave a reason enough," groaned the young officer. "Didn't we stand within earshot of his bedside, talking glibly of Trebova and Cecile Moseley? Didn't I let him know that the girl he idolised had never cared a jot for him, and was only waiting for news of his death, to throw herself away, upon a ruined gamester, who wasn't good enough to fasten his puttees?"

"Then you think——?"

"I don't know what to think. I only know that I could kick myself for having spoken, and that he must be found before he does anything desperate."

"In his present state, I judge he will not have gone far," was the quiet response.

The young officer—too hurried to grasp the depth of meaning in the other's words—hastened without, inquiring right and left for traces of the man they sought.

Yet not till the bright African moon rose, did they find him, lying face downwards—dead.

In one hand was grasped the bandage, which he had torn from his wound, in the other, the miniature of a woman, set in gold, and mounted with precious gems.

It was the surgeon who gently removed the miniature from the clenched fingers, and Oliphant who recognised the beautiful, cold face.

"Cecile Moseley!" he said. "I knew it! The ——" he ground out an execration from between his clenched teeth, "will get her wish after all. I'd give the world to keep her waiting though. Now if only——" and he paused, and looked anxiously at his companion.

The surgeon in his turn examined the miniature carelessly.

"I fail to recognise this, as the portrait of Cecile Moseley," he said, "and there is practically no other clue to connect this poor fellow with Granville. Captain Granville Berkeley has been reported missing, I see no reason for that report to be altered." And with a sudden movement, he hurled the miniature far out across the veld.

Then he extended his hand to Captain the Hon. Neville Oliphant, which the latter pressed silently.

HUBERT BARTLETT.

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NOT A COWARD.

"*Caramba! Que insoloncia!*" The words were uttered by a lovely woman whose flushed cheek, flashing eye, and knitted brow, spoke even more than words the indignation which filled her breast.

She was the young wife of Commodore Coe, the commander of the small Navy of the State of Montevideo.

The lady was Spanish by birth as well as in feelings, and the cause of her anger was the sight of a ship which had been for two days standing off and on before the harbour, using every signal of insult and defiance to induce the ship of Commodore Coe to come out and fight her.

This he could not do, for two reasons: The first was illness, which confined him to his cot; the second, that he had not one-third of a crew—not even men sufficient to man his guns.

At the moment when she uttered the words which commence this tale, Brown, the admiral of the Buenos Ayres ship, had hoisted a flag at his gaff, whereon was embroidered, in legible letters, "Coe, the Coward." This was more than his noble wife could stand; for well she knew her husband's truth and valour.

After gazing an instant at the flag she raised her jewelled hand, and, taking from her finger a diamond of great value, cried to the officers and men who stood around her on the deck:

"I will give this diamond to any man who will bring me yonder flag."

For a moment there was no response; the men looked at their officers—the officers glanced at each other—but volunteers for so desperate a service seemed scarce.

"What, is there not one of all your number who dares the trial? Is my husband's ship, then, indeed manned by cowards?" exclaimed the lady, while her beautiful lip curled with scorn, and her flashing eye sparkled with the fire of contempt.

A young officer—an Englishman—who had been lately appointed, stepped forward, and modestly said:

"I was only waiting for my seniors to speak, senora. Had any of them volunteered, I should have begged to accompany him. As it is, I pledge myself to bring you yonder flag before the sun rises, or die in the attempt. But I ask not your jewel as a prize for my success—one tress of your glossy hair shall be my reward."

"You shall have both, brave boy," replied the lady, and her cold look of scorn changed into a sweet smile as she asked his name.

"It is Cochrane Bennett, senora," replied the youth, and he blushed beneath her earnest gaze.

He was slim but well formed, looked very young, but in his dark-blue eye and compressed lip an observer could read one whose manhood was not made by years alone.

The sun was setting behind a bank of slowly-rising clouds, which threatened darkness and a storm.

The moment that his services were accepted young Bennett turned to the crew, and, as he glanced over them, said:

"I want six men to man the whaleboat that hangs at the after-davits."

Struck by his gallantry nearly one-half of the crew stepped aft—now that they had a leader, volunteers were plenty.

Bennett glanced his eye over them, and in a few moments selected six whom he knew to be both daring and firm—they were British sailors.

"Go and sharpen your cutlasses," said he. "I shall not have a musket or pistol in the boat. If we fight it must be steel to steel and breast to breast, for we must succeed or die."

The men answered only by a look, for they were of a class whose motto is "Deeds—not words."

They hurried below to obey orders, while others proceeded by his directions to muffle the oars of the boat and to put a sail and water into it.

One half hour later the sky was covered with clouds and darkness had set in.

Bennett had been careful to take the compass course of the enemy's ship when the last light of the dying day gave the opportunity, and by this alone he hoped to find her. At this time the lady was on deck, standing by the binnacle-light, regarding the preparations of the party who were about to shove off.

At the moment the boat's crew cried out that all was ready for a start the young leader came aft to the side

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of the senora, and taking from his neck a miniature he handed it and a letter to her, saying:

"If I am not on board at sunrise, senora, please to send the miniature and letter to its address."

The senora looked at the portrait—it was the likeness of a young and beautiful girl.

A tear filled the senora's eyes.

"You need not go," said she. "No, you love—perchance are beloved. Your life is precious—I will not expose it."

"This is my only sister, whom I almost adore," interrupted the youth; "but one who would scorn me if I played the coward or dishonoured my name. Send the letter and likeness to her if I fall. Farewell till to-morrow or for ever."

The lady was about to answer, and again to entreat him to stay, but ere she could speak he was over the bulwarks and the boat had shoved off.

"Give way cheerily, men! A long pull, a strong pull and a pull altogether!" said our young hero in a low tone as he left the ship's side, and he soon felt, by the trembling of the frail boat, that his orders were obeyed.

The night was very dark.

A calm was on the deep, and in the air, but it was portentous of a storm.

A small binnacle-light and compass had been placed in the boat, and by these Bennett shaped his course—himself taking the tiller and steering right out into the offing, regardless of the coming storm and rising clouds, keeping his eye steadily fixed on the compass—knowing that if the vessel had remained hove-to at sunset, he must be very near her.

But he looked in vain to see her dark hull loom up in the gloom; he looked in vain to see a light which might guide him to her. But Admiral Brown was too old a fox to betray his position by lights.

At this moment, when he was completely at a loss which way to steer, the dark clouds which had been gathering overhead burst with a long, vivid flash of lightning and a peal of deafening thunder—but he heard not the thunder, he heeded not the rising storm. That flash of lightning had shown him the vessel, not one cable's length from him.

"Steady, boys—steady!" he whispered when the thunder ceased; "I shall pull under her stern and get on deck by the carved work and netting on her quarter."

The men pulled slowly and silently on; and as he had marked well her position, the young officer in a moment found himself close under the vessel's stern. At this instant another flash of lightning illumined the sky and water; and then, as he glanced up the gaff, where the flag had been hoisted, he saw it was not there—it had been hauled down.

He paused, thought for a moment what could be done, and then formed his resolution.

"I shall go on board alone, men!" said he. "Keep the boat where she is! If the flag is where I think it is—in the admiral's cabin—I will have it! If I am not back in five minutes, and you hear an alarm shove off and go back to our ship and tell them that Cochrane Bennett died like a man! You must be cautious! Reef the foresail—for the storm will be down upon us in ten minutes!"

All this was whispered to the men, whose heads were leaned forward to hear the orders they dared not disobey, much as they wished to share their leader's peril.

Springing lightly from the boat, Bennett caught the quarter-nettings with his hands and noiselessly ascended to the bulwarks. He could hear the regular tramp of the officer of the deck—who, having already had everything reefed down for the blow, had nothing to do but to pace the deck—for it was so dark that he could not see him.

A second more and the brave boy was down on the deck and at the cabin door, which stood slightly open.

He peeped through the narrow crack and saw the red-faced old admiral seated at his round table, with two of his officers by his side, engaged over the contents of a square bottle which looked very like that usually found to contain schnapps.

A glance at a settee just to the left of the table showed the object of his enterprise. The flag, for which he had perilled his life, lay there, where it had been carelessly thrown after it was hauled down.

The young hero did not pause long to consider what to do, but quietly walked into the cabin, and, taking off his cap very politely to the admiral and officers, said in a calm and courteous manner to the admiral:

"I am come to borrow this flag to wear to-morrow, if you please, sir!"

"Who the dickens are you? What do you mean?" cried Admiral Brown as he and his officers sprang to their feet.

"I am Midshipman Bennett, sir, of the Montevidean service," replied Cochrane, who had now seized the flag, "and mean to carry the flag to Commodore Coe!"

As he said this he bounded to the cabin door, followed by a bullet from the admiral's pistol, which grazed his ear, and ere the alarm became general he stood upon the taffrail of the vessel.

"Look out for me below!" he shouted, and flung himself into the sea without a moment's hesitation. His boat's crew recognised his voice; he was caught up in a moment and dragged into the boat, while a volley of pistol shots was fired at random by those who were above.

The storm had now broken out and the wind began to come on with fierce and fitful gusts.

"Up the foresail—be in a hurry, lads!" cried the young hero as soon as he could draw breath after his ducking.

The crew did so, and the next moment the little boat was flying towards the harbour before the blast, like a seabird winging its way to its young one's nest.

The enemy opened a harmless fire of grape shot in the direction, but it only served to tell the anxious watchers on board of Commodore Coe's vessel that something had occurred.

The latter, therefore, at once showed lights to enable our young hero to make a straight course for her.

It was about half an hour after the first gun had been fired by Admiral Brown's vessel when the boat of the young hero rounded to alongside of his own ship.

"Have you captured the flag?" cried the señora, as Bennett bounded over the side.

The only answer she received was the banner, wet as it was from the water, and cut in two places by the balls which had been fired at its captor.

The lights of the vessel gleamed not so bright as did that lady's eyes when she caught the noble youth in her arms and kissed him again and again.

U. J. MINTER.

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Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

VIII.—IT WAS A BEDSTEAD AND A BUREAU WHICH SPOILT A HAPPY EVENING.

MR. BOWSER had about half finished his cigar and his evening newspaper when Mrs. Bowser looked up from her sewing and said:

"I wish you'd stop at some furniture shop in the morning and see if you can get a man for an hour or two. I want the things moved out of the spare bedroom and the carpet taken up."

"That's a fair specimen of your economical way of doing things," answered Mr. Bowser. "There's about ten minutes' work to be done, and yet you'd pay a man thirty shillings or two pounds instead of asking me."

"You ought to get a man for five shillings; and the last time you took down a bedstead you——"

"The idea of paying enough money to buy two tons of coals for ten minutes' work!" he interrupted. "When I sit down and think over your reckless extravagance, I wonder that we have a shilling in the bank. What is it to take down a bedstead, to move a bureau out into the passage, to rip up a carpet? I'll have the room empty in five minutes."

He got the cumbersome mass clear of the wall and on the move.

"But I thought I'd have the bureau brought down stairs."

"Well, that may take two minutes longer."

"And you know the bedstead is big and solid, and once when you started to take it down you br——"

"I know nothing about it. If I ever started to take it down, then down it came. I don't propose to pay out my hard-earned money for somebody to come up here and loaf about. It is now exactly seven o'clock. In five minutes the room will be empty, and one minute later I shall be back here again."

"I'll pay a man out of my own pin money," protested Mrs. Bowser.

"You'll pay nothing," he replied as he started upstairs followed by the family cat.

No preparations had been made for removal. Mr. Bowser entered the bedroom to find the bed undisturbed but with one wide sweep of his arm he gathered up blankets, sheets and pillows and carried them down the passage. Then he returned and gave the mattress a twist and a whirl which flopped it off the bed and out of the door, and the spring mattress came next. Mr. Bowser was whistling and working to the time of the "Absent-Minded Beggar." No man can pick up a spring mattress and keep strictly to the beat. The cat saw the impending calamity and leaped to the top of the bureau.

As Mr. Bowser lifted up the mattress and gave it a bounce he lost his balance and went down with a crash, and the spring mattress, having nowhere else to go, followed him. He was fighting it off with hands and feet when Mrs. Bowser looked in at the door and exclaimed:

"Thank heaven that the life has not been crushed out of you!"

"Crushed be hanged!" he yelled as he got rid of the mattress and stood up. "If you imagine I'm the sort of man to be crushed under a blamed old spring mattress you don't know me!"

"I knew you'd have trouble, and that was the reason I wanted you——"

"There's no trouble about it. The silly cat tripped me up. I'm big enough and old enough to boss this job, and you get back downstairs and attend to your knitting."

There are two ways of taking down a mahogany bedstead weighing a ton or two. Mr. Bowser's way was peculiarly his own.

His first move was to grab the footboard and wrench and twist and draw the whole bed across the room and push it back again. Then he stood off and kicked at the rails until the heels flew off his slippers.

It was a sudden inspiration which caused him to lift up the ends of the rails, and to his great surprise they were loosened from the head and footboards. The footboard he managed to move down the passage without accident, but when he came to the headboard, he

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realised that a desperate struggle was at hand. So did the cat, and in her wisdom she retreated to the passage to await events.

"Why in thunder my great grandfather didn't use this lumber to build a stable is more than I can make out!" growled Mr. Bowser as he surveyed the massive structure and waited for his second wind.

It had to be moved, however, and there was no time to figure up hydraulic power and electric motors.

Mrs. Bowser crept up and sat on the stairs and shivered, and the cat walked to and fro in the passage and had nervous tremors, while Mr. Bowser moistened his hands and looked furtively about for a point of vantage.

Suddenly he jumped forward and made an attack. His object was to take the bedstead by surprise and run it down the passage before it could make a move in defence.

He succeeded to a degree—that is, he got the cumbersome mass clear of the wall and on the move for the door, and Mrs. Bowser was beginning to breathe easier and the cat feeling more hopeful, when there was a yell of terror and a crash which shook things right down to the cellar bottom.

The headboard had jibbed.

Mr. Bowser thought the whole of London's Hooligans had attacked him for a moment, and the jump he made as he yelled out ought to be preserved in the history of athletics. He struck his head against the wall with a bump which made him see stars, but he had saved his life.

"I knew it," said Mrs. Bowser, as she looked into the room and saw the headboard flat on the floor and Mr. Bowser wiping the dampness off his bald head.

"Has anybody asked for your opinion?" he replied as he tried to assume a careless air.

"I thought you were surely killed. I hope you will now let the rest of it go and send up a man. You see, you don't know how——"

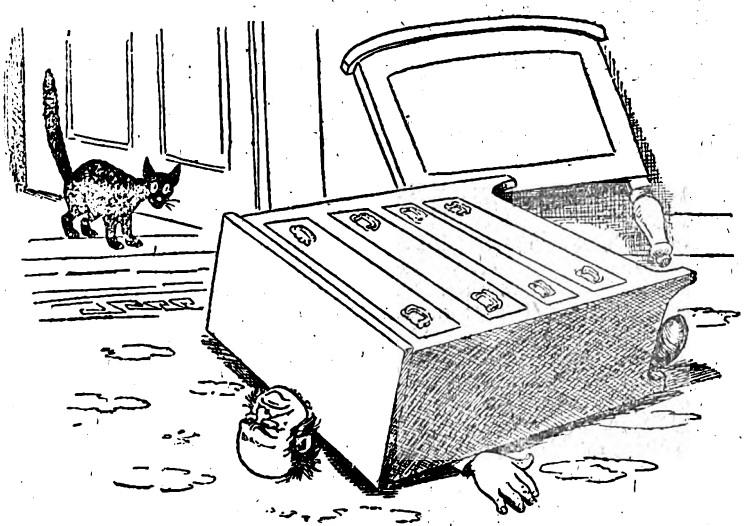
"Oh, I don't, eh? But I'll show you that I do. I'll clear this furniture out if I break both legs and drive my head through the wall."

Mrs. Bowser went back to her seat on the stairs, and, after lifting her eyes in appeal, the cat got as far down the passage as she could.

It was Mr. Bowser's plan to lull the headboard into a feeling of security by giving it a brief rest while he tackled the bureau. To get the bureau out he must move it over the headboard. He had no statistics at hand to consult, but he had great confidence in his lifting powers.

Mrs. Bowser heard him suddenly rush upon that bureau and pull it away from the wall. Then she heard him gasping and grunting as he lifted at the corners. She followed him with her ears as he walked round behind it and put his shoulder to the wheel and got a brace for his feet. There was a louder grunt, a muttered, "Get up there, confound you!" and then the house was shaken again.

Mr. Bowser had heaved up, and the bureau had heaved down, and the loss of his toe-hold at a critical moment had given the bureau the victory. He lay there under it, and he seemed to be dead. The cook was summoned through the speaking tube, and by their united exertions the two women lifted the bureau and rolled the unconscious form of Mr. Bowser aside. It wasn't a case of death. He had simply been squeezed as flat as a pancake and had his bones twisted about. Mrs. Bowser had scarcely taken his head in her lap and moistened his nose with camphor when he opened his eyes and sat up.



He lay there under it, and he seemed to be dead.

"Who — who pushed the old bureau over me?" he demanded as soon as he could get his breath.

"Why, no one, of course," answered Mrs. Bowser. "You were trying to lift it up, you know, when——"

"When you sneaked into the room and jammed against it and hoped I would be squeezed to death! I might have known you would do it. Woman, although you have been foiled again, this is the end. You have tried assassination once too often."

"But how can you say——"

"That will do. It's as plain as day. I'll now drag my limping, bleeding body to the library and prepare the papers, and to-morrow our respective solicitors can arrange about the separation, and alimony. Not a word—not a single word. I see through it all, and, baffled murderess, I wish you good night and pleasant dreams!"

M. QUAD.

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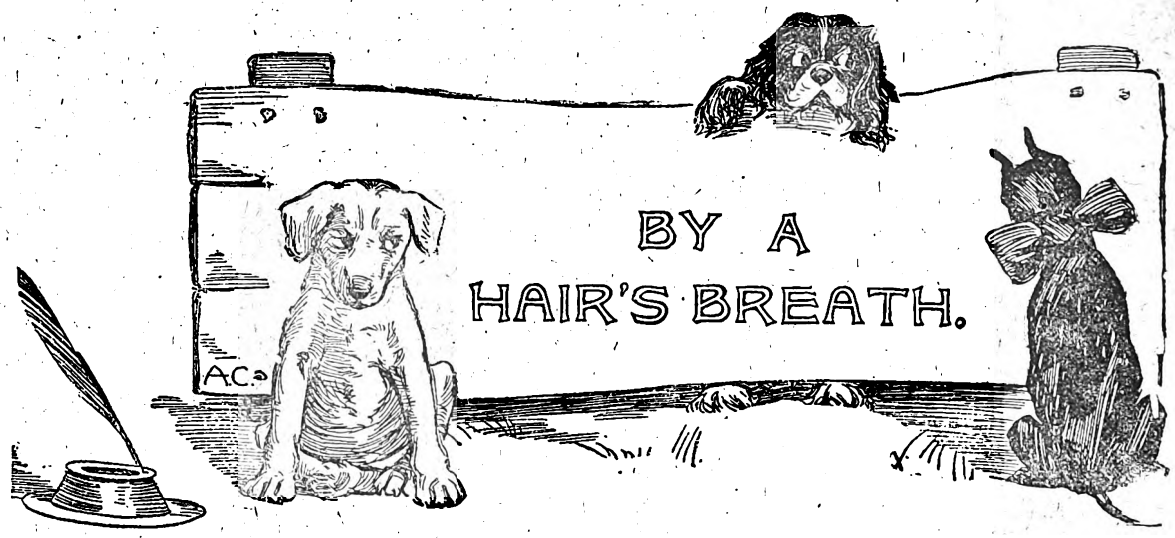

JACK ORTON ought to have been a happy man, but strange to say he was not.

Two months ago the mere fact that he was walking down the street with Edith Sampson would have been joy unspeakable. But that was two months ago, and to-day this was not enough. He desired other and greater privileges.

The distance between them was not great, literally, as they walked along. In fact they often, and perhaps purposely on his part, touched elbows. But to Jack they seemed to be separated by an impenetrable, unsurmountable wall. The obstacle was, however, nothing so extensive as a wall, but it was quite as material. It was a "toupee."

How Jack cursed the day when he had been tempted to don the thing. Better far if he had made her acquaintance, and paid his addresses to her, bald as an eggshell as he was. Then he might have at least courted her with a clear conscience, and without the moral obligation of confessing to the fraud of the soft ambrosial locks which surrounded his handsome face.

Jack was not a coward, he was not in the least faint-hearted upon ordinary occasions, but he felt that never in his life had he been obliged to face a situation so tragic, so critical.

How often had the thought of that wretched wig deterred him, when an eloquent avowal was ready to burst from his lips. A man in a wig was so ridiculous. Any other infirmity would have been less objectionable. For instance, he thought he might have owned to false teeth with a better grace.

Sometimes he resolved to keep silent on the subject, and win her under false colours if he could, which in his humble adoration and modest self-depreciation he deemed hardly possible. Then would come the horrible thought that after they were married the dread disclosure was bound to come. She would never have confidence in him after that. Edith was the soul of frankness herself, and had lofty, almost Quixotic notions of truth and honour.

But then, to precede a declaration of affection by the announcement that he was bald was simply ridiculous, and try as he would, John had never been able to introduce the subject casually. Much as he dreaded it, he often tried to lead up to it. Many times he had imagined himself saying in the most careless fashion:

"Oh, by the way, did you know that I wear a wig? A terrible attack of typhoid left me with the merest fringe of hair, and it has never come on again. Odd, isn't it?"

But he never said it. He was always interrupted by some trivial occurrence, which his reluctance and sensitiveness made sufficient cause for postponement of the dreaded confession. This very day he had had such an excellent opportunity to make the break.

They had stopped before a street window to inspect some actor's wigs, and he had just opened his mouth when Edith said:

"Oh, Jack, look! Isn't that magnificent?"

And turning, he saw in the next window a woman who advertised somebody's hair restorer by standing there, and displaying to the public gaze her long hair, falling like a veil until it swept the floor.

How Jack hated hair restorers! He had tried every one on the market.

Edith inspected the splendid locks with pleased interest.

"Isn't it beautiful," she said. "If there's one feature of beauty I admire more than any other, it is a fine head of hair," and she complacently tucked a hair-pin back in her own shining coils.

That settled Jack for the afternoon. The carefully arranged speech froze upon his lips, and he became silent, depressed and miserable.

To the passers-by they were a remarkably handsome and well-mated young couple as they walked along together—Jack, erect, athletic in figure and immaculately attired; Edith, smart and up-to-date in a well-fitting tailor-made gown and a smart hat tipped over her pretty eyes, and resting jauntily on her bright hair.

Edith's own hair was beautiful. Red, gold or bronze, according to whether you saw it in sunshine or shadow, it curled about her face and neck in bewildering little rings, and lay against her well-shaped head in many braids and coils, most cunningly arranged.

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Jack thought that, unloosed, it must be quite as long and splendid as that of the woman in the window.

Alas! he thought, he would never be permitted to see it thus. A wild notion seized him of casting his wretched headgear away and falling at her feet, crying tragically:

"Take me as I am or spurn me forever from your presence." But he thought of his shining pate, and groaned. "No use," he said drearily to himself, "she would simply laugh if I told her, and I could never stand it, to have her laugh at me, though I shouldn't blame her. A man in a wig is so silly." And while she seemed so unattainable, she had never appeared so desirable.

To the most casual observer, it was quite evident from their attitude, that they were both very gone indeed, although each was honestly unaware of the depth of the other's feelings. They had eyes and ears for nothing. So absorbed was their attention in their own supremely interesting affair that as they crossed the muddy street, they neither saw the frantic gestures of the policeman who stood at the crossing, nor heeded the shout of two or three persons as a runaway horse dashed round the corner; and that was the reason why they were both knocked down by the wheel of the light trap.

When the horse was brought to a standstill a little further up the road, and the excited crowd closed in upon the startled pair, it was found that the accident was really a more serious thing than it had first appeared.

Jack was badly bruised and shaken up, but able in a few minutes to stagger to his feet; but as for Edith, that was quite a different matter.

In falling she had struck her head against the curb and lay white and limp, giving no sign of life when lifted up. Jack felt sure that she was dead, and leaned sick and faint against a lamp-post.

Things move rapidly in a great city, and it scarcely seemed a moment before an ambulance was brought up. In a trice strong arms had lifted the unconscious girl into it, and Jack, stunned and dazed, crept along beside it, not knowing what he did, or where he went.

Arrived at the hospital, he recovered somewhat, and when they had laid her down, yet white and still, he grew braver and stronger at the physician's words of encouragement.

"Only stunned by the blow, I assure you," he said cheerfully. "There's a cut on the head, but it's not a bad one, and when it is dressed, we'll soon bring her round. Undo her hair, will you please, nurse?"

Jack's eyes followed wistfully the woman's deft fingers as she removed hairpins and unwound coils Suddenly her hand made a movement which had the effect of paralysing him. He looked at her with surprise and horror.

Nearly the whole of Edith's hair seemed to fall off in her hands, leaving upon her head the merest wisp. She tossed it carelessly upon a table near by, and seized the scissors to trim the locks round the wound.

Jack gazed with an increasing fascination upon the shining mass on the table. It was fastened together with a hard little loop. He had seen such things before in hair-dressers' windows.

As he gazed earnestly at it, his heart grew large and light. It seemed to him as if he must shout for joy.

All the dark, dismal clouds which had heretofore hung over the skies of his courtship had suddenly rolled away. What a glorious vista the future offered!

When the wound was neatly dressed the nurse went away, leaving her fast-recovering patient in his charge. Did the kind soul appreciate the situation?

Jack believed that she did. With proud assurance he lifted her dear head upon his shoulder, and stroked back the pretty tendrils which fell over her forehead. If the button which the nurse had wound trimly and tightly at the back of her head had been less tiny and funny, he would not have been so hilariously happy.

"Edith darling," he whispered softly.

Then he seemed to choke and hesitate. The old embarrassment had returned, and threatened to make him dumb, but he remembered the hair on the table, took fresh courage, and went bravely on with what he had wished so long to say.

"I was a stupid thing to let you get hurt this afternoon. I don't know if you'll think you could trust me to take care of you always, as I want to do, since this has happened. Could you, Edith?"

Edith nestled the little button more cosily into the hollow of his shoulder.

The faint colour had begun to creep back into her cheeks, and there was a light in her eyes and a smile on her face which made Jack's heart thump furiously.

"Oh, Jack," she sighed, weakly, but contentedly, "what an awfully long time you've been saying it!"

E. T. Burton.

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On Active Service.

WHEN the office chaps who're paid to do the spouting,
The big tin pots who run the gas work show,
Have strained themselves to come out top in shouting,
Have been done brown at playing bluff-and-blow;
When the tons of love and kisses in the billy-doos they write
Have changed to nasty questions and remarks not quite polite,
When the British agent kicks the mat and puts his hat on tight,
It's getting near the time for us to go.

Time for us to go,
Ta-ra-ra!
Time for us to go.
We're the last resource of diplomacy,
And it's time for us to go!

With "great regret" they issue marching orders,
And we line up in the yard, all in a row;
There's a gilt-edged band to brighten up the borders,
And a general on a gee-gee in the show;
And the crowd comes out to holler with a reg'lar three times three,
And the girl we leave behind us holds the kiddies up to see,
And we feel a sudden choking where our silly hearts should be—
It's a wrench when it's time for us to go.

Time for us to go,
Ta-ra-ra!
Time for us to go.
The trooper's shrieking in the dock,
And it's time for us to go!

Of course the beastly Channel starts a-chopping,
And we feel we want to go and die below;
So they give us small arms drill to set us hopping,
And there's polishing to keep us in a glow.
And they shove the ship to contract speed and just a trifle more,
For we are reinforcements and they're needing of us sore,
It's red-hot hump and hurry on the way to white men's war—
Things are shifting when it's time for us to go.

Time for us to go,
Ta-ra-ra!
Time for us to go.
Cape Town is running special trains,
And it's time for us to go!

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They land us with a cheering song and chorus,
They're very pleased to see T. A. and Co.;
We mustn't stop, we quick-march straight before us,
They head us north, and there in front's the foe.
We stand up straight to meet them, and if they get in the way
We have to push them over—and it isn't done in play—
We're on the Queen's Own Business, and She won't brook delay—
There is hustling when it's time for us to go.

Time for us to go,
Ta-ra-ra!
Time for us to go.
We're expected in Pretoria,
And it's time for us to go!

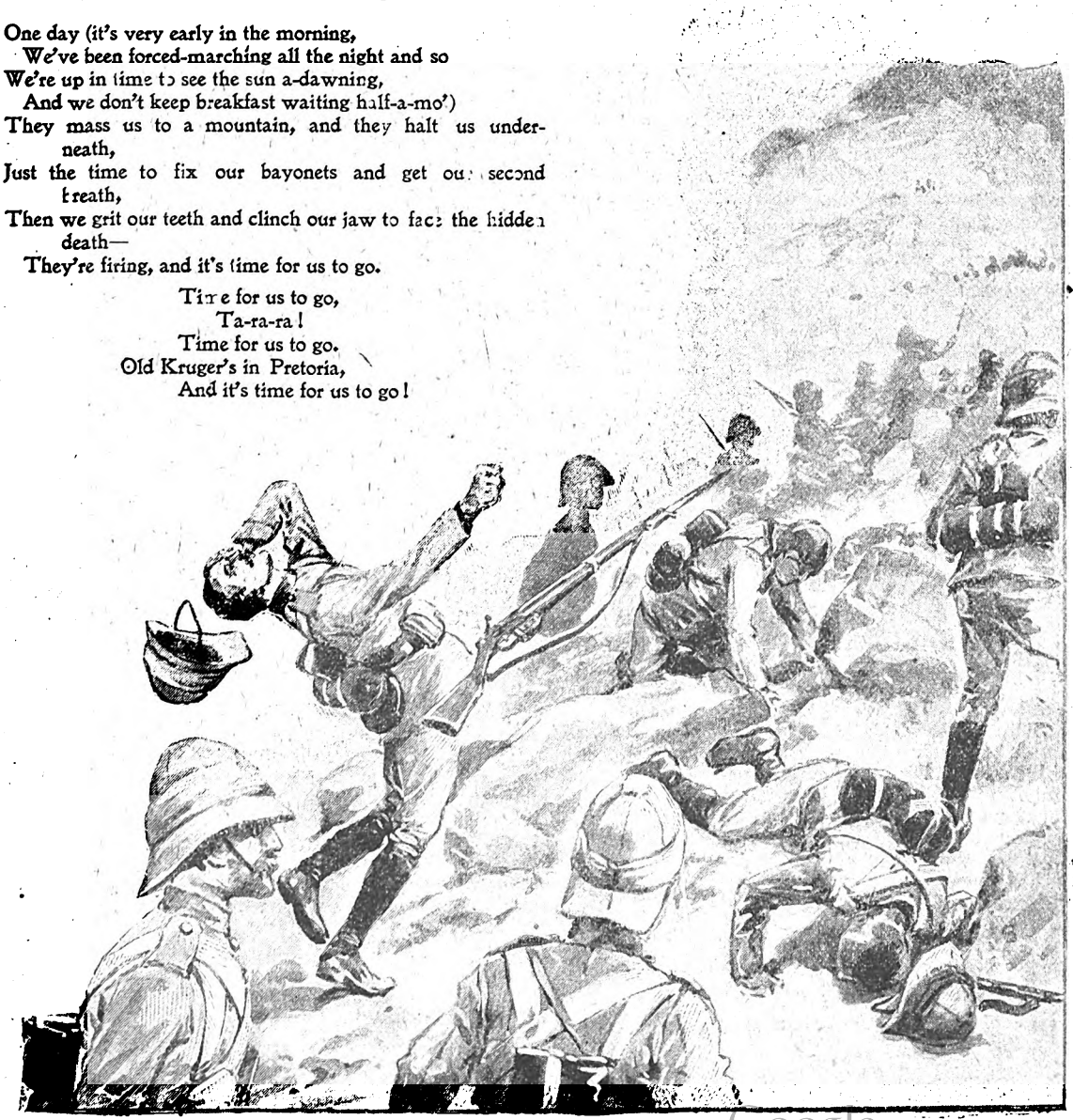
One day (it's very early in the morning,
We've been forced-marching all the night and so
We're up in time to see the sun a-dawning,
And we don't keep breakfast waiting half-a-mo')
They mass us to a mountain, and they halt us underneath,
Just the time to fix our bayonets and get our second breath,
Then we grit our teeth and clinch our jaw to face the hidden death—
They're firing, and it's time for us to go.

Time for us to go,
Ta-ra-ra!
Time for us to go.
Old Kruger's in Pretoria,
And it's time for us to go!

We still press on, there isn't any waiting,
From rock to rock we're darting to and fro,
The way we flounder's worse than fancy skating,
Yet up and on the khaki columns flow.
Red is the fire before us, at our feet the sand is red,
The ranks are thinning as we stride across the fallen dead,
But our officers are leading and they point the way ahead—
Conquer or die, it's time for us to go.

Time for us to go,
Ta-ra-ra!
Time for us to go.
We shan't be home for Whitsun—but
It's time for us to go!

ALFRED SLADE.



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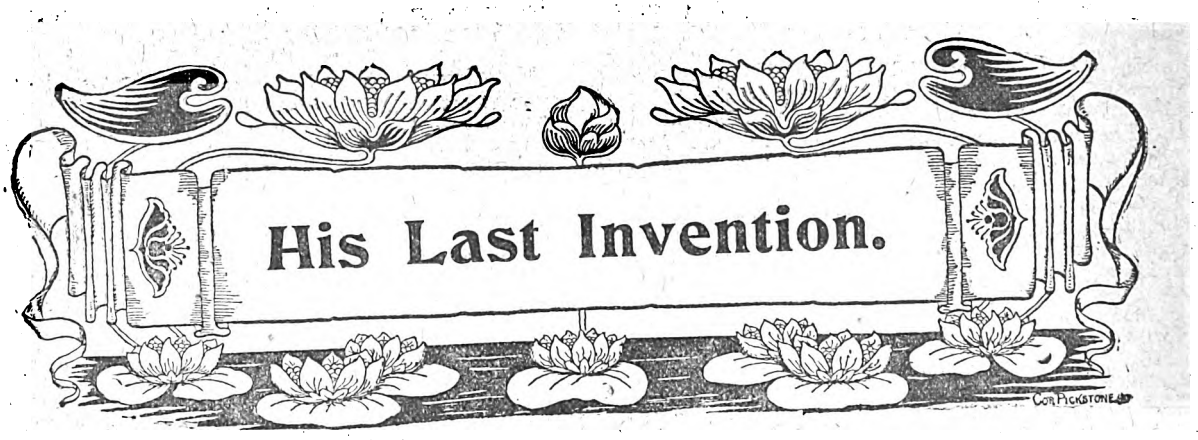

RICHARD WILSON strode moodily up and down his workshop, which was littered with the odds and ends of machinery which represented the ruins of a hundred castles in the air. He was always inventing, was Wilson; always spending days and nights over the manufacture of some wonderful machine or other which was to revolutionize the world and make him famous, only to find after all his labour some irremediable flaw in his plan which rendered the completion of the machine an impossibility, or prevented it working.

He gazed round him on the gaunt skeletons, in wood and brass, of past hopes, and clenched his hands fiercely.

"A failure! Everything in my life is a miserable failure!" he cried aloud, as he paced the floor.

It was not the breakdown of an ordinary invention, however, that wrung the bitter words from him. He had grown accustomed to waking in the morning with an idea worth millions in his head, and going to bed at night with the knowledge that it was not worth a million match-sticks; and had become quite philosophical over the failure of his plans for money-making.

But this time it was a different arrangement that had broken down, an arrangement by which the inventor hoped to make himself a married man; and the mainspring, in the shape of Annie Downs, the woman he loved, had failed him. In his clenched hand he held the letter she had sent him, abruptly announcing that she wished to break off their engagement.

There was a revolver lying on the inventor's bench, which had thrice had its barrel pointed towards his forehead, but three times the man's purpose had failed him at the decisive moment.

The fact of his cowardice added to the man's irritation against himself.

"I fail in everything that would make life worth living, and cannot even kill myself," he went on, in his daring soliloquy. "Must everything I try prove a failure?"

He took up the revolver once more with sudden determination, and holding the barrel between his teeth, pulled the trigger. There was a click, but nothing more; he had forgotten, after all, to load the thing.

He had failed once more to kill himself, and the nervous shock he had experienced had made it impossible for him to repeat the attempt. He must think of something, he told himself, which would make the last act easier for him.

He was determined on suicide, and committed himself by informing Annie of his intentions; but when the single movement of a finger was in a moment to make all the difference between life and death, his physical courage deserted him, and his finger became powerless. He must prepare some plan for killing himself in which the exact moment of his death would be decided by chance or the action of machinery.

The idea pleased him by suggesting the need of invention, a need which his mind was always ready to meet, and he set himself with a melancholy pleasure to think out the details of a killing-machine which should fulfil all his requirements. Death must be painless and instantaneous, of course, but must act at a different moment from that at which the victim took the decisive action which would make his fate certain and unchangeable.

He drew out a plan rapidly, making rough sketches of the mechanical details on the back of Annie Downs' fatal letter.

Then he went down to his forge on the floor below, and worked hard at the manufacture of the instrument he had invented. It was finished by midnight, and, in a grim sort of way, Richard Wilson was proud of his work.

The invention was in the form of a dynamite bomb, which would explode by the slow action of an acid eating through a barrier of cement. One of his past failures had left him with the dynamite on his hands. It was inclosed in a carefully welded iron case, joined strongly, so that once the case was closed it could only be opened by the exercise of considerable force. It was connected as strongly to an iron chain, which the inventor fastened round his waist, joining the two ends with a padlock. When he had locked it he laid the key on his anvil, and, with a stroke of his hammer, beat it out of shape.

To get away from his anvil and tools, with the chance they still offered him of changing his mind and breaking the chain round his waist, as well as to save the empty house from needless injury, the inventor put on his hat and walked out into the country road that stretched in front of his lonely dwelling.

He walked along rapidly, anxious, while his determination remained firm, to place as great a distance as possible between himself and any chance of undoing his handiwork. There was not a soul abroad, of course, at such an hour, and Wilson had no fear of injuring anybody but himself by the explosion that now he was expecting every moment.

When the road took him near any habitation he made a wide circuit, to keep it outside the range of the dynamite bomb round his waist. With the same thoughtfulness for others he stopped, when, after about half-an-

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hour's walk, he caught sight of the figure of a woman approaching him. He was like a man with the plague, whom it was dangerous to approach, and Richard was about to turn precipitately, and get out of the woman's way, when something in her figure struck him as familiar.

The night was a moonlight one, and in the middle of the road where she was walking it was as clear as noonday. A second glance told him that his suspicion was right; it was Annie Downs hurrying along the road.

In the complete surprise of seeing her in such a spot at such an hour, the thought of his invention went clear out of his head. It was due to go off at any moment now; but Richard was so astonished that he actually forgot its existence.

He hurried forward.

"Hullo, Annie!" he said, "what are you doing here?"

For answer the girl flung her arms round his neck and burst into tears. She had hurried as fast as the train would bring her to him immediately on receiving his letter with its hint of suicide, and had walked from the nearest station, three miles further up the road, expecting to reach his house only in time to find him a corpse.

She sobbed for five minutes on his breast without being able to speak a word in the relief of finding him alive.

The letter which he had received, and which she was supposed to have written, she had never heard of except through his reproaches. It was a forgery, no doubt, concocted by some spiteful acquaintance of his or hers to ruin their happiness. She loved him with her whole heart and soul, she sobbed, and could never dream of giving him up.

It seemed to poor Richard Wilson, who loved her more than his life, to find that all the mental agony through which he had passed had been without cause or basis made him feel the happiest man in the world.

It was actually not until he clasped his sweetheart in his arms, with every doubt and suspicion removed, that the consequent pressure of the bomb against his flesh reminded him how in a few more minutes at most it would blow him to atoms.

* * * * *

This story was told me as true by a friend of mine, who knew the interest I take in the subject of suicide. He stopped when he had reached this point in his narrative, as if it were concluded.

"And were they both killed," I asked with interest.

"Oh, no! they were married shortly afterwards. Wilson gave up trying to invent from that night, and became pretty successful when he found his real *forte* —tale writing."

"But the bomb?" I asked. I was not interested in the man's subsequent career.

My friend pretended to look surprised.

"My dear fellow, you don't think a machine could possibly work when Dick Wilson had invented and made it!"

F. REDMAN.

"NOW, Harry," asked the teacher of the juvenile class, "what is the meal we eat in the morning called?"

"Oatmeal," was the little fellow's prompt reply.

LONDON Shoeblack to Innocent Paddy: "Shine your boots, sir?"

Innocent Paddy: "Indade, ye may, sorr!"—and (leaving the shoeblack unpaid)—"Indade, an' the bhoys are very clane an' koind in this part of the counthry!"

TOMMY had announced his intention of going to the swimming-baths, when his mother remarked:

"The paper this morning has an account of a little boy who was drowned while trying to swim."

"Too bad," said Tommy. "I wonder if he is any relation to the poor little boy killed the other day by a 'bus on his way to school?"

"WHAT would our wives say if they knew where we were?" said the captain of a schooner, when they were beating about in a deep fog, fearful of going ashore.

"I shouldn't mind that," growled the mate, "if we only knew where we were ourselves."

THE other day a little boy had his long curls cut off, and was annoyingly reminded of the fact by the remarks of all his friends. Going with his family into the country, soon after his arrival he came running into the house in great sorrow, crying:

"Mamma, mamma, even the hens laugh at me! They all say 'Cut-cut-cut-got-your-hair-cut!'"

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Briton or Boer?

By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

INTRODUCTION.

For years past Britain and the Transvaal have been spoiling for a fight, and it was left to that well-known author, Mr. George Griffith, to write this strong and exciting serial nearly four years ago graphically describing a huge war between the two countries.

The story, coming so soon after the Jameson Raid, was read with unusual interest.

Now that Briton and Boer are in deadly conflict it will be interesting to read the story, and see how far the imagination of the author has actually come true.

CHAPTER XXXVIII. (*continued*).

General Goodenough had meanwhile telegraphed the news of the complete and crushing victory that he had gained to Cape Town and Worcester, announcing his intention of marching on the latter place *via* Houwhoek and Villiersdorp so soon as his men had had proper rest and food.

The first thing that Sir Charles Warren did on receiving these tidings was the exact opposite of what he might have been expected to do. Although the day was going completely in his favour, he suddenly gave orders for the captive balloons to be brought down, the guns of the batteries to be limbered up, and preparations to be made for an immediate retreat on Worcester.

At the same time he gave out the astounding intelligence that the Loyalist force at Caledon had been driven back by overwhelming numbers, and was in full retreat on Cape Town. It was not long before the news reached the Boers through the medium of some prisoners who had been taken during the storming of a krantz, and who made good their escape during the first hurry of the retreat with an ease which, under other circumstances, might have seemed suspicious to them.

The leaders of the Boer commandoes immediately had a conference to discuss the amazing intelligence, and decided to get their men together so soon as possible, to hang on the rear and flanks of the retreating force, and wait until further reinforcements should make them strong enough to venture an attack on Worcester. They also sent mounted messengers across country to meet the victors of Caledon and urge them to join forces before Worcester, so that they might completely hem the Loyalist forces in there, cut them off from their base at Cape Town, and compel a surrender which would practically end the war so far as the South was concerned.

Sir Charles conducted his retreat with all possible order, but still with just sufficient appearance of haste to give the Boers the idea that it really was a retreat and not a feint.

They followed at a respectful distance, making no hostile demonstrations, but carefully closing every avenue of approach to the north, which they now fully believed to be theirs.

They had had such a terrible lesson in the new tactics that none of them had stomach for any more fighting that day, added to which prudence and their natural predilection for fighting their battles with overwhelming odds on their side, convinced them that it was much better to let the enemy fall back unmolested on Worcester, and then catch him between their two armies and crush him at a blow.

As the railways and telegraphs of the South were entirely under the control of the Loyalists, there was no chance of the truth reaching them from the Caledon district until it would be too late for them to escape from the trap that they were walking into, not only without suspicion but in the belief th t, after all, the day had gone in their favour, and that forty-eight hours or so more would see the end of the British power in Cape Colony.

With the exception of Cape Town, Worcester was the last town of importance in the South which remained in possession of the Loyalists, and its fall would probably go far towards deciding the whole war. It would set some forty thousand men free to march on the Free State and catch General Carrington in Bloemfontein between themselves and the Transvaal commandos, and after the surrender or destruction of his force the combined columns would march in overwhelming strength upon Natal. Another Amajuba would be fought, the British Government would surrender as it did before, and the United States of South Africa would become an accomplished fact.

For the sake of preserving the continuity of the action it will be well to state here that, while these events were happening in the South, Kimberley had been re-fortified and garrisoned by a thousand men. The rest, in obedience to orders from Pretoria, had marched back to the Transvaal by way of Bloemhof and Potchefstroom to join General Pretorius at Vereeniging, preparatory to the great concentration of forces on the Natal border by Volksrust, where, as has already been stated, President Kruger and his government had decided to fight the battle which was to decide the mastery of the continent.

General Carrington had meanwhile been establishing himself firmly at Bloemfontein, and had assumed the office, for the time being, of Administrator of the Orange Sovereignty for her Majesty's Government. Captain Murray had taken his armoured train up to within sight of the Transvaal border, and came back with the report that the country was perfectly quiet, and that the Boers had evidently given up the idea of advancing on Bloemfontein,

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as they had blown up the great bridge over the Vaal near Viljoen's Drift.

The next day he received intelligence through his native scouts of the intended concentration of the Boer forces in the south-east. This, of course, produced a corresponding change in his own plans. He telegraphed the information to General Cox at Newcastle, and told him that he would march forthwith with his whole available force on Volksrust, so as to be able to take part in what now fairly promised to be what President Kruger had termed it—the Armageddon of South Africa.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

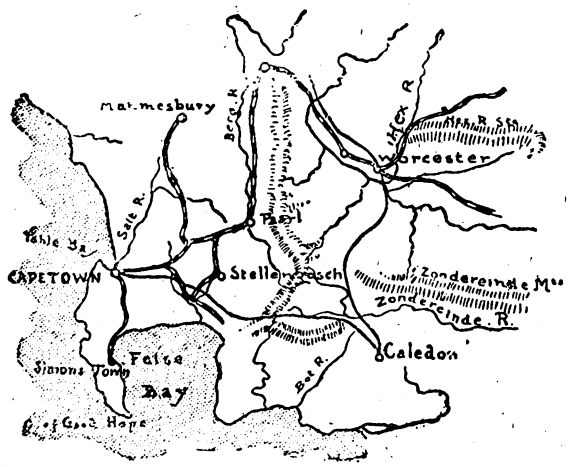
COLLAPSE IN THE SOUTH.

No army ever marched to certain defeat with more certain hopes of victory than did the western section of the rebel burgher forces on Worcester.

Sir Charles Warren conducted his feigned retreat with the same consummate skill that he had planned his whole campaign, and fought his first battle in the war. He took two full days to retire, and whenever the Boers, getting a little impatient, pressed him at all too hard, or seemed inclined to come inconveniently close, they invariably found him in such a position that it would have been an absurdity to attack him—believing, as they did, and as he knew that they did—that if they only let him get far enough they would catch him irretrievably in just the same trap that he had laid for them.

Early on the third day he took his force into Worcester without the loss of a single man or gun, and at once proceeded to dispose it as though he anticipated a regular siege, but meanwhile he detached a force of four thousand men up the line to Tulbagh Pass and Mitchell's Pass to reinforce the garrisons that were holding them, and when this had left he despatched a company of gallopers up the Caledon Road to meet General Goodenough's force, which by this time would be well on the way, and explain the situation to them.

Meanwhile, the Boers came on down through the moun-



tains and into the plain on which Worcester stands encircled by its walls of rugged hills. Not the slightest opposition was offered to their coming, and they were permitted to reconnoitre almost within pistol-range of the earthworks which, in view of such a contingency as this, General Goodenough had caused to be constructed for the defence of the town against attack from the North and East.

The Boers, in the absence of all news from Caledon, which was one of the results of all the horses of the prisoners having been taken away, were so confident that Worcester would be the last stand of the British force, and so determined that there should be no escape from the trap, that they sent off strong detachments to occupy Goudini, Breede Road, and Ceres Road, with a view to cutting off their escape up the line, and this, too, they were allowed to do without the slightest hindrance.

Such complaisance naturally redoubled the confidence of the rebels, and to such extent did this grow that during the afternoon of the third day after the battle of the Hex River they ventured upon what in regular warfare would be called a reconnaisance in force. But this met with such a terribly warm reception that by the time they had had about a thousand men killed and wounded, they decided to wait for the victors of Caledon, and then carry the town with a rush of irresistible numbers.

Every tree, every wall, and every house corner sheltered its man.

About daybreak on the morning of the fourth day, the victors of Caledon really did arrive, though not quite in such shape as the rebels expected. During the night General Goodenough's force had crossed the Breede river and made a detour to the north-east across the railway some four miles below Worcester, and passing across the right flank of the rebel force, which was now in camp in the roughly triangular plain to the north and west of Worcester, had planted three mountain batteries of seven-pounders and Maxim-Nordenfeldts in such a position as to completely rake the only road of retreat now left open to the Boers, that is to say the one back again through the Hex River Pass.

Just after daybreak they heard heavy rifle firing away to the eastward, and simultaneously some of their scouts came in with the news that the British pickets had turned tail and were riding full speed for the shelter of the town, evidently expecting that an attack was about to be made from the Robertson side. Such being the case, it was manifest that the advancing force from which the rifle firing proceeded could be no other than the victorious burghers of the eastern force.

It may be said here that other scouts had started out to bring in correct information as to the character of the newcomers; but these had been promptly cut off, and either captured or shot by specially detailed vedettes of Australian Horse before they had had time to carry their dangerous tidings very many yards.

The result was that the Boers, eager not only to possess Worcester and Tulbagh, which would place Cape Town at their mercy, but also to avenge the rout which they had suffered at the hands of the despised and hated *rooineks*, advanced quickly but with confident stealthiness to a general assault upon the town on its north-western side, fully believing that by the time they got to work their friends and allies would be delivering their assault on the west.

In order that the two assaults might fall as nearly as possible together, they sent written details by well-mounted men to inform their allies of their plan of action, and to urge them to strike quickly and hard. It is almost needless to add that these despatches fell into quite the wrong hands, and that the bearers brought no answer back.

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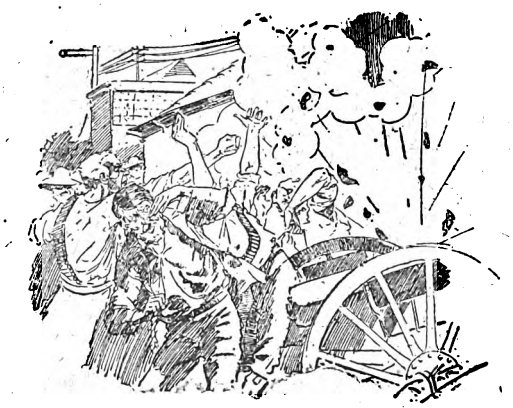
The assault was made by three columns moving in almost parellel directions. As they had no artillery beyond a pair of light mountain guns and three Maxims, which had been brought down from Kimberley, their first and greatest chance of success lay in carrying the town with a rush, and trusting to their rapidity and accuracy of rifle fire.

They were allowed to come within about two hundred



As they were taking aim a shell would come and burst.

yards of the outermost defences towards the north and west before one of the defenders' guns spoke. If they had been better tacticians their leaders would have known that with such men as their adversaries under such a leader as they possessed, this was not by any means an encouraging sign.

But they, accustomed to no other than the irregular guerilla warfare which had served so well in the times of '80 and '81, and totally miscalculating the capacity of the leaders and men with whom they now had to contend, went on with a dogged recklessness, honestly believing that the *rooineks* were afraid of them.

But when they reached the wooded confines of the town they were suddenly and rudely undeceived. Every tree, every wall, and every house corner sheltered its man or men, and then they got such a taste of their own style of warfare as the survivors never forgot to the end of their days.

In a very few minutes it was proved to demonstration that the Cornstalk could shoot every whit as straight as the Afrikander, and, moreover, could handle his rifle a great deal more smartly.

As the heads of the columns came into point blank range, as they were allowed to do, thousands of rifles began to spit out their pale gushes of flame and white smoke in front and on both flanks of them.

They threw out sharpshooters to take cover, but they never reached it, for all the cover was taken, and at every step a man rolled over dead, or with all the fight knocked out of him.

But this was only the beginning.

The three columns, numbering nearly five thousand men each forced their way, though with sadly-diminished ranks, through the first zone of the rifle fire, believing that this was not only the first but the last defence, and confident that in a few minutes more their friends from Caledon would come to the rescue.

Meanwhile not a gun had spoken. They were all in the Central Square, posted so as to command every approach, and as Worcester is built on the rectangular system it is easy to see what this meant. The moment that a body of them had succeeded in fighting its way into one of these streets a storm of shell and machine-gun fire swept along it like a hurricane, and cleared every living thing out of it.

At the same time, too, bugles of an unmistakably British note were ringing out all round the plain and along the mountain sides. Outside the town the battle was raging no less fiercely than inside.

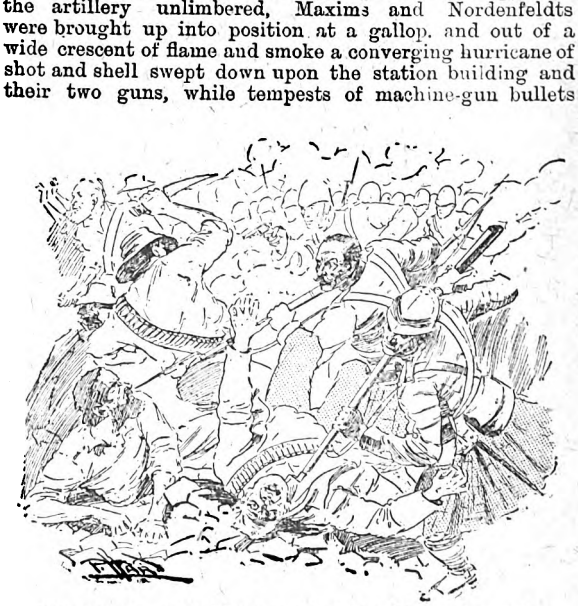
Under cover of the mountain batteries which General Goodenough had so skilfully planted, a brigade of the Australian Horse, four thousand strong, had fought its way across the railway, and a troop of the Cape Artillery Volunteers, following close in their rear, had planted their Maxims so as to sweep the line.

But while this was being done the Boers had stormed the railway station, which is a considerable distance to the westward of the town, and planted their two seven-pounder mountain guns so as to command the up and down lines, and had at the same time advanced their three Maxims up towards Worcester with the intention of cutting off the retreat of the British after they should have been driven out.

The fire from the mountain batteries was now turned exclusively on the station, and as the amateur rebel artillerists had never been under shell fire before their first disastrous experience in the Hex River, they found the working of their guns a somewhat embarrassing experience.

Just as they were taking a nice steady aim an untimely shell would come and burst within a yard or two of them, and by the time a new relay of gunners came to take up their suddenly abandoned task, another one would come and turn the air about them into a sudden mist of fire, filled with sharp angled fragments of iron which it was quite impossible to dodge.

Presently, to the dismay of the survivors at the station, the columns which had gone into Worcester began to come out again sadly thinned in numbers and lacking in order, and after them came troop after troop of foot, and horse, and artillery, and down from the hillsides, and out from the eastern end of the valley there came other troops, and before they well had time to grasp what had happened, the artillery unlimbered, Maxims and Nordenfeldts were brought up into position at a gallop, and out of a wide crescent of flame and smoke a converging hurricane of shot and shell swept down upon the station building and their two guns, while tempests of machine-gun bullets



The Capetown Highlanders went in with the bayonet.

were rained upon the retreating columns as they fought and struggled on their way towards the fatal Tulbagh Pass.

Then the artillery storm stopped as suddenly as it had opened, and like a storm of another sort the Australian and Canadian Horse swept down and finished the work,

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capturing both the Maxims and the seven-pounders before their unskilled gunners had had time to fire a hundred shots. One of the columns—that which had entered the town from the north—wheeled round and made a desperate effort to fight its way back by the Hex River, but it was assailed by charge after charge of the Mounted Infantry, and just as it was on the point of breaking up, the Cape Town Highlanders and the Hampshire Regiment went in with the bayonet and completed the ruin.

All that now remained of the rebel force that had attacked Worcester was by this time in full retreat towards Tulbagh and Ceres, which, in fact, was now the only road open to them, for to the south were the Breede river, the wastes of the Southern Karoo and the mighty wall of the Drachenstein Mountains, and to the east and north were the victorious British forces with their irresistible superiority in artillery.

They still hoped in a dull sort of way that they could reach the almost inaccessible fastnesses of the Winterhoek and Witzenberg Mountains, and hold Tulbagh and Mitchell's Passes against any force that the British leaders could bring against them, until the Transvaal and the Free State came to their aid, or, at least, crushed the *rooineks* in another Amajuba, in which case, of course, the British Government would come down on its knees as it did before, and beg them to accept all that they wanted.

But by nightfall they knew that they had only been driven into yet another trap, for the detachments that they had thrown out up the line in the morning came back to tell them that both the Passes were occupied by British artillerists and the dreaded sailormen from the ships at Cape Town.

Still they pressed on fighting a running fight with a dogged courage that was not untinged by despair until darkness came down, and, by making aim impossible, silenced the almost incessant fire of the guns.

By this time their main body had reached the green and fertile Tulbagh Basin, and here wearied men and horses thought that at least there would be a respite from slaughter.

But Sir Charles Warren was not the man to let a defeated foe stop running when he had once got him on the run. Half-a-dozen field search lights had been brought up by train with the heavier guns from Worcester, and an hour or so after dark the long white beams of light began to sweep the floor of the Basin from as many points of vantage, and where the light fell shells presently began to burst, and the hail-storms from the machine-guns to fall, and under cover of the fire and the lights—most effective cover of all—the British and Colonial troops moved up nearer and nearer through the darkness, seeing without being seen.

And then ere long the inevitable happened. The Boers, dazzled and bewildered by the electric beams, broken up by the shell fire and mown down in scores by the bullet storms, at last lost both heart and nerve and began to cry for quarter. They were no longer even an irregular force. They were a rabble without leaders, in which each man fought for his own hand till he had fired away his last cartridge, or threw away his rifle and sought shelter or surrendered as his courage or his fear made him.

All night firing went on in different parts of the wide-extended field, and all night parties of disarmed rebels either came in or were brought in to the headquarters at Tulbagh station to submit to the mercy of their conquerors. But when morning dawned and the two or three thousand rebels who were still under arms realised the utter hopelessness of their position, they with one accord walked out of the shelters they had taken and surrendered unconditionally.

Thus ended the revolt of the Cape burghers upon which the enemies of British rule in South Africa had counted so much. Vastly superior in numbers, they had been played with, delayed in their movements, out-generalled by superior skill, and at last decoyed into a hopeless trap in which their numbers merely meant more slaughter. As the Sepoys had done in the Indian Mutiny, they reckoned without the unconquerable grit of the Englishman, and the incomparable skill of the English officer when he is in a really tight place.

More than this they had forgotten, or never knew, that there were thousands of Englishmen born under other suns than England's who were willing and ready to cross

A party of four was standing on the top of Timeball Hill.

thousands of miles of sea, and to fight and die for the honour of the old flag rather than see a shred torn from it by such hands as theirs.

As at Caledon, the leaders when found were put under arrest and sent down to Cape Town, the weapons and horses of the rank and file were taken away and they were told to go about their business and behave themselves. The victorious forces were then moved down to the capital, a garrison of five thousand men was left in Cape Town, and the remainder of the British and Colonial troops were embarked in the transports, which two days later steamed out of Table Bay *en route* for Durban to join the Army of Natal, and take part in what bade fair to be the final struggle on the old battlefields of '81.

CHAPTER XL.

From Pretoria to Westminster

On the morning of the 25th of February, between ten and eleven, a party of four was standing on the top of Timeball Hill on the southern confines of Pretoria, overlooking the pretty, pleasantly-situated seat of government of the South African Republic, surrounded by its guardian hills and shaded by its groves and avenues of trees.

It was here that, in the old times of the English occupation, the Timeball, which marked the official hour after noon, had been situated, but it had long since been removed as a relic of abominable tyranny. Here the Prince and Princess Regna, Mr. Secretary Leyds and Baron de Matalha were standing on the eve, as it were, of the crisis of the Republic's fate, discussing things past, present, and to come.

Materially speaking, they were also standing on the rampart of a well-constructed and heavily-armed fort. A little to their left, across the Apies River, rose the conical kopje known as the Artillery Camp, now also a fort. To the right stretched away a double range of steeply scarped hills with a wide rolling plain between them, and here, too, preparations had been made for the speedy instalment of mountain batteries.

In front of them to the northward were the lower ridges of the Meintjes Hill, and, towering above these the rugged heights of the Magaliesberg, broken by a deep cleft. On Meintjes Hill, too, there were forts, and concerning all these forts there was a curious fact well known to all the party—their fighting faces were turned towards the town.

After many denials as to the very existence of these

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structures on the part of the Government and its hired press, it had at length been admitted that certain fortifications were being constructed "for the defence of the seat of government." But now that they were actually in existence it was easy to see that their true object was to make Pretoria untenable by an invading force until every one of the five forts was silenced or captured. Not less than a quarter of a million had been spent in their construction and arming,

The President had taken his rifle and mounted his horse.

nearly every penny of which had found its way into German pockets—and after all the German squadron had not found its way into Delagoa Bay.

Pretoria was almost empty of troops save for the garrisons of the forts, and the sentries who patrolled the pavements round the Government building and the principal points of the town. All the available forces, including strong detatchments of artillery and the German-drilled, uniformed troops which had been raised under the name of police, had several days ago left for the south-east, and with them nearly all the chief men of Pretoria had gone.

The old President himself had kept the promise which he had made to the council of State. He had taken his rifle and mounted his horse, and ridden out at the head of his burghers to lead them to the battle which was to decide the fate of his country and his people. With all his faults and deficiencies, mortal and intellectual, there was no braver man, and certainly there was no more pathetic a figure that day south of the Zambesi than Paul Kruger, the Voortrekker, and now in good truth Father of his People.

In the hour of destiny he had discarded alike the shiny broadcloth and tall hat, which had ever given him the look of an ill-dressed funeral mute, and the smart brougham in which he had been wont to ride in a travesty of state, surrounded by his armed policeman.

Booted and spurred, in shirt and riding-breeches and jacket, with a well-filled bandolier across his broad chest, and a wide-brimmed slouch-hat on his grey head, he had ridden out, sitting his horse in spite of his unwieldy bulk with the easy seat of one who had spent many a hard day in the saddle, and with the firm resolve in his stout old heart to come back a conqueror and head of an independent Sovereign State, or to find a grave under the shadow of the great, flat-topped hill on which lay the bones of the last English General who had essayed the conquest of his country.

They had been talking of this as they surveyed the pleasant and peaceful scene beneath them, and, in spite of the fact that each of them, or at least three of them, had thoughts carefully hidden from the others, they had talked of it with genuine admiration.

"Whether he comes back victor or prisoner of war," the Baron was saying, "the President will at least have won a place in history; but in any case he will be the last of his kind, the last representative of patriarchial government in the civilised world."

"Are you not forgetting our Little Father, the Tsar, Baron?" said the Princess with a faint note of satire in her voice. "Ah, I wonder what his Majesty is doing now, and whether all the Russian squadron was captured on that fatal day in Delagoa Bay."

At these last words the Secretary, who was looking nearly ten years older than he had done two months before, raised his eyebrows and looked round sharply.

"May I ask whether Your Highness has still any hope that news of the situation as it was then may after all have got to Europe in time?"

"There is the possibility," said the Prince, replying for his daughter. "But even if it did," he went on, speaking not only gravely but with obvious sincerity, "I am afraid I should be misleading you if I held out any hopes of armed European intervention now. You may be quite sure that news of every success that has been so unexpectedly and, I am compelled by the facts to say, brilliantly gained by the English and their Australian and Canadian allies has by this time passed over the wires of the world.

"There is nothing that succeeds like success, you know. Had matters gone the other way at the first, Russia and her allies would, as I promised you, most undoubtedly have used force to prevent England exerting her full strength to deprive you of the fruit of your victories. But were they to use it now to deprive the English here of what they have won in the face of most adverse circumstances, the rest of Europe, and probably America as well, would turn upon them. Personally, I believe that the Anglo-Saxon race would rise the whole world over and fight to the last gasp rather than permit such a thing to be done."

"There I quite agree with you," said the Baron, smiling with an air of bland innocence which would have made it impossible for the acutest observer to have guessed how much he knew of the true inwardness and causes of those first fatal successes, "but I suppose you still believe with me that if the second battle of Amajuba has the same result as the first, Europe will not permit England to snatch the fruits of victory by main force from our good President and his valiant burghers."

"That also the world would not tolerate!" exclaimed the Secretary before the Prince had time to reply. "And, after all, it is then that we shall want the moral and material help of Europe, rather than now. What have these English and their black and white allies done, when you come to think of it? They have defeated one or two of our smaller commandoes. Carrington has taken Bloemfontein and annexed the Free State, but we have taken Kimberley and all the important inland towns to the South, and thousands of the Free State burghers have crossed the frontier and joined us rather than submit again to the English rule.

"What have these English done?"

"What has happened in the South we do not and cannot know yet, but you will see that the day after to-morrow, if not earlier, our friends in the Cape will take the English in the rear while we attack them in the front, and if they do that there will be little fear of the result. Mark my words—within a week the English Government will be on its knees again, and in a month Paul Krüger will be President of the United States of South Africa."

"And in a few more months his successor after him," added the Princess, smiling her sweetest and inclining her

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head with a slight but graceful gesture towards the Secretary.

The Doctor's sallow cheeks flushed slightly as he acknowledged the flattering forecast, and the Baron, rubbing his hands gently together, added:

"And then, I suppose, we shall see the dawn of the new era for Africa, when her gold and diamonds shall be transmuted into iron and steel, when her sea-ports shall be arsenals and her fleets of war and peace shall command the highways of the south and east. What a future there might be for such a country as this, inhabited by such a people, and united under a single wise and strong government! Ah! it must be a pleasant prospect for you, Mr. Secretary. It will be no mean *rôle* to play, that of the Man of Destiny for South Africa"

Curiously enough, as the Baron spoke, there was one name in the minds of all four of them, and that was not the name of the Batavian adventurer, who aspired to the dominion of half a continent. It was the name of a man who, six thousand miles away in England, was just then bringing about the very end that Prince Paul had predicted; for Cecil Rhodes had come back and faced the music—and the music had suddenly grown dumb.

As he strode on to the stage of English politics the yelping snarl of the little Englander had died away into a whine, half of fear and half of apology, and those who had looked big enough when he was far away spending his millions, risking his life, and doing his work in silence, looked very small indeed when they essayed to stand beside him.

Then, when their whinings had died into silence, his long-stilled voice had rung out strong and true. From a score of platforms throughout the country he pointed with one hand to the gallant band of men who, as all England then believed, were fighting with their backs to the wall against overwhelming odds for one of the most priceless possessions and fairest ornaments to the British Crown, and with the other to the political cravens who had betrayed the traditions of a thousand years, and backed down to a foreign menace.

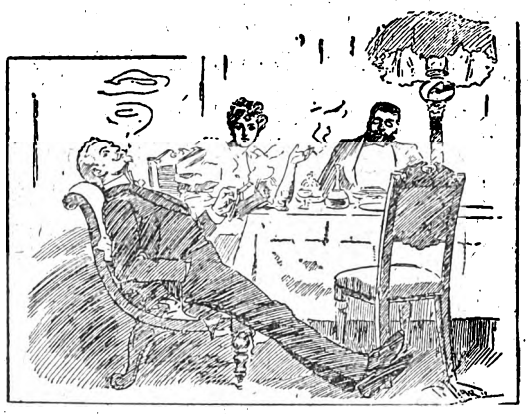
So far England had been silent, but silent with an evergrowing uneasiness and sense of personal and national shame. But when this man—who, with the means at command of buying every indulgence and luxury, and every shape of purchasable honour that nineteenth century civilisation had to sell, had forsaken all for the sake of his high Imperial ideal, and gone to take his place on one of the war-swept outposts of the Empire—spoke out and told her the lesson he had wrought, then England woke and asked herself who those were who had robbed her of her ancient strength, and placed this blot upon her ancient honour.

And then she, too, spoke out in her righteous wrath, and Europe heard her voice ring out echoed by a reveillé that rolled round the world from post to post along the bulwarks which stretch away eastward till East becomes West and westward till West becomes East again. Like magic a new party, whose elements had long been growing and taking shape, sprang into existence with all that was strong and honourable in the nation behind it, and at the head of this party stood the man of action who had come to save England from the plague and dry-rot of words.

On both sides of the House of Commons there stood up men who had but needed such a leadership to fling party considerations to the winds and devote themselves honestly, if tardily, to the task of proving that the Mother of Nations could still wield the strength that had made her great.

From both the Conservative and the Radical benches, from above and below the Gangway, there came a steady, clear-voiced demand for the policy of the Government to be submitted to the tribunal of the hustings, and this demand was echoed from end to end of the country by such unmistakable thunders of coming storm that ministers at last, individually by no means sorry for release from an impossible and shameful position, resigned their portfolios and went into the country.

When some of them came back it was to find that the old party lines had been swept away, and that one great and united Imperial Party so completely overshadowed all others that they were but little groups and factions of cranks and faddists in comparison with it, and the first official act of the British premiership of Cecil John Rhodes was to inform the House of Commons, amidst the applause of the whole nation, that all the available naval and military resources of the Empire would immediately be devoted to giving the



"These English are, after all, a wonderful race!"

only practicable and honourable answer that could be given to the arrogant and unwarrantable menaces of Russia, France, and Germany, and by a singular and momentous coincidence, this speech was, allowing for the difference in time, delivered on the eve of the 27th of February, the second Amajuba Day, while the Briton and the Boer, massed in their thousands and armed to the teeth, were lying camped on the veld and the hillside, waiting for the sun to rise over the field of Africa's Armageddon.

CHAPTER XLI.

PLAIN WORDS FROM THE PRINCESS.

AFTER an interesting, if not very profitable, day spent in an excursion round Pretoria, an examination of its elaborate and expensive defences, Prince and Princess Regna and the Baron returned to a quiet and comfortable dinner in the same room at the Grand Hotel in which, not very long before, Mr. Secretary Leyds had received the news of the beginning of troubles for the South African Republic in the tidings of the revolt of the Outlanders in Johannesburg and the rising of the native population.

If the truth must be told, neither the Prince nor the Princess were in the very best of spirits, albeit that their training in the ways of diplomacy and society made it comparatively easy for them to hide the true inwardness of their mental state behind a mask of cheerful cordiality and careless *insouciance*, which would have deceived anyone less penetrating and less well-informed than their guest.

As for the Baron, he was just as suave and smiling and cheerful as they had ever known him to be, and yet there was something in his manner—an undefinable *soupçon* of mastery—which might almost have been called superiority, which instinctly warned both the astute and practised diplomatist and the daughter who was the worthy heiress of his talents that, stowed away somewhere in that capacious head of his, there was a clear knowledge of facts at which they, with all their educated cleverness, could only make approximate guesses.

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The dinner itself, served, as usual, by the deft Dmitri, had been seasoned only by conversation which, under the circumstances, might have been called commonplace—academic discussions of the military and diplomatic pros and cons of the situation, and interesting, if profitless estimates of the characters of the various actors who were playing leading *rôles* in the tragedy which was to culminate not many hours later.

But when Dmitri had retired and the stage which is pleasantest in all dinners was reached—the stage of the walnuts and the wine, which merges imperceptibly into the condition of coffee and cigarettes—then each of the trio became conscious, from many an apparent trifle in the conversation that had proceeded, that something like a battle of wits was to begin.

Whether by good luck or good management, it had

"There will never be a United States of South Africa."

happened that Mr. Secretary Leyds had found so much business of State awaiting him on his return from the excursion that it was quite impossible for him to accept the somewhat anxiously-awaited invitation to make one of the party. But, be that as it may, the conversation soon took such a turn as seemed to indicate that his room formed a perfectly satisfactory substitute for his company.

"These English are, after all, a wonderful race," said Prince Paul, leaning back in his chair, and blowing a thin blue stream of cigarette smoke out in little puffs, as though by way of punctuation, as Dmitri softly closed the door behind him, and straightway went about his master's business.

"There is no denying that, even from the point of view of their hereditary enemies, among whom, I suppose, I may count myself, there certainly seems to be something in them which, at the last moment, when their confusion and overthrow seems certain, suddenly asserts itself, and turns the best-laid schemes of international diplomacy into failure.

"It was so in the old times of the Armada, when Philip of Spain was on the point of making himself master of Europe. So again after Austerlitz, when Napoleon was almost master of the world. So, too, again in India; but there, the question of to-day is: 'Is it going to be the same thing in Africa?' What is your opinion, *mon cher* Baron?"

The Princess removed the slender yellowish-brown covered cigarette of the finest Russian tobacco from her dainty lips, and as the little wreaths of grey-blue smoke escaped from between them, she leant her elbow on the table, and, with the cigarette poised between her fingers, looked at the jovial countenance of the Baron with an eloquent note of interrogation in each of her lovely eyes.

The Baron, who, by special permission, was smoking an excellent Muria from the Prince's own cabinet, also leant back in his chair and drew a long, silent, luxurious whiff and looked up at the ceiling after the fashion of a skilful general, who takes care not to expose his forces to the heaviest batteries of the enemy. Then he removed his cigar and sent a long, curling stream of smoke up in the direction of his gaze, which, presently slanting like a downward flash across the Princess's line of sight, stopped suddenly and caught the Prince full in the eyes.

"My dear Prince," he said with a little wave of the hand that held the cigar, "compliments apart, I would a great deal sooner sit and hear you talk than be constrained to answer you, for what you say is so much more instructive, and, I may be permitted to add, entertaining, than anything that I could say in answer to it. You have touched, it seems to me, upon the greatest of all the problems of history: Why should one race rather than another be predestined, as it were, to fill the greatest place in the history of a given age?

"Why should these English, as you call them, who four hundred years ago were an insignificant people inhabiting a few small islands in an intemperate clime, have carved out for themselves an empire which now covers two-fifths of the lands of the earth? Why should they have had their Drakes and Raleighs, their Clives and Wolfes, their Wellingtons and Nelsons? Why should they have been able to singe the King of Spain's beard in Cadiz, and to draw that thin red line across the field of Waterloo which barred Napoleon's way to empire? Why——?"

"Because," said the Princess, suddenly dropping the hand which held her cigarette upon the table, "their women are the mothers of men. Because," she went on, with cheeks that flushed and eyes that sparkled in spite of her habitual self-control, "their sons are the men who stormed the heights of Alma, who made the charge at Balaclava, who fought us one to ten at Inkerman and beat us, and I, a Russian, say it."

Both the Prince and the Baron stared at her in unfeigned astonishment, and the Baron at least thought that he never seen a beautiful woman look so beautiful as she did just at that moment. She glanced rapidly from one to the other, and then went on, speaking with, if possible, a still more eloquent ring in her voice:

"Yes, it is so, unpatriotic and all as it may sound for me to say it. At home they may have feeble governments, divided counsels, and what we should call traitors in their highest places, but abroad they are men and heroes. Look what they have done here in Africa. When the President made his proclamation at Krugersdorp, it seemed as though they would have been swept into the sea within a month. A little more than two months have passed. They are victors all along the line.

"We know, and you too know, Baron, that they have crushed the rebellion in the Cape, smothered it in Natal, snatched victory out of the burning ruins of Johannesburg, stormed the strongest town save this in the interior, drawn ships and men and arms over thousands of miles of sea, and at this moment they are confronting the forces which were to have overwhelmed them with forces of equal or greater strength.

"It needs men to do work like that, and these English are men, and that is the answer to your question, my father, and yours, Monsieur le Baron."

"I am afraid that would not be very pleasant hearing for our friend the State Secretary," murmured the Baron with a twinkle in his bright, alert eyes, and a pleasant smile on his mobile lips.

"Pah!" said the Princess, flicking the ash off her cigarette with a gesture eloquent of scorn. "That moustachioed popinjay! Fancy such a man—if one may use such a word in such a relation—aspiring to rule where the English have reigned! Why could he not see that without the Boers he was nothing, and that if he did not win their trust and confidence he would be something less than nothing? That brave old man, impossible animal as he is, taught him a lesson the other day when he took his rifle and rode out to fight his last fight.

"But instead of learning it he stops here spinning his paltry spider-webs of amateur diplomacy under the guns of

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forts that should have had their faces turned the other way. These Boers may be ignorant and pig-headed as the animal whose name sounds like theirs, but they know a man who can fight from the man who can only scheme and plot in the dark. No, there will never be a United States of South Africa, and if there could be Mr. Secretary Leyds would never rule them. One might as well imagine a Jew Johannesburg millionaire as President, a mountebank crowned with a cap and bells and with a stick and bladder as sceptre!"

"You are somewhat bitter to-night, my daughter," said the Prince, looking at her with half-closed eyes. "If I did not know you have a perfect digestion I should have thought that the Secretary's lunch had disagreed with you—or was it, perchance, the Secretary himself?"

"I think you may say the Secretary," she replied, with just a tinge of acidity in her tone. "We came here to seek a man who, at the least, might have been expected to be a capable instrument. We have found an aspiring bungler who has made such mistakes—mistakes so colossal that their corresponding successes ought to have given him the empire of the world. Who but the most arrant of bunglers could have mismanaged matters so that that detestable English fleet should have been permitted to strike its heaviest blow at the weakest place in his armour?"

Here the Baron smiled approvingly, and in his inner thoughts he pictured to himself that solitary watcher standing on Reuben Point, looking through his field-glasses as Mr. Michael Ostroff's yacht steamed out past Inyack Island on the morning of the 16th of December, and of a certain brief code message which had flashed through the cables up and down the coast a few minutes afterwards.

"Then you are of opinion, Princess," he said after another puff at his cigar, "that the dream, or rather let us say the ideal, of Africa for the Afrikander is not destined to be immediately realised?"

While he was saying this the Prince had been looking at his daughter with the half-vexed, half-amused air of one who recognises that the Fates are against him, and doesn't very much care that they are. She read his thoughts instantly, as no other could have done, and replied to the Baron with a pretty air of careless resignation:

"Yes, that is my opinion, and, my father, I think you will allow me to say it is yours too eh? Is not that so?"

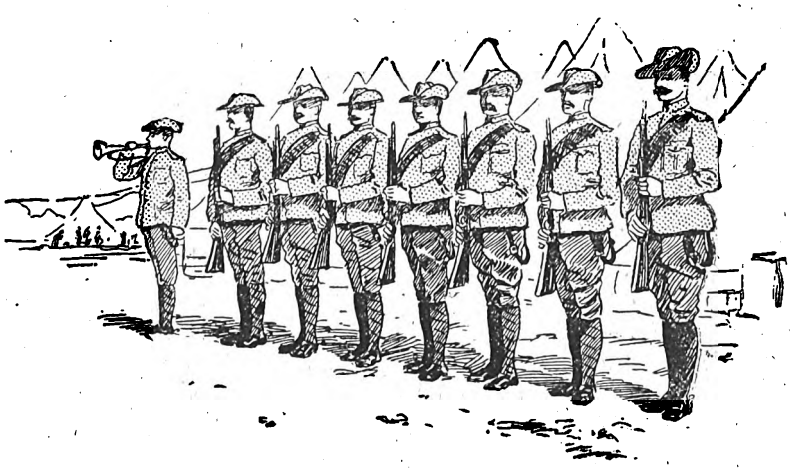
"Yes," said the Prince with something like a drawl, "I suppose it is. To be frank for once, that is to say to enjoy a sensation which is refreshing from its novelty, as we are all in a sense conspirators here, it may be admitted that our good friend the Baron holds the winning cards, always supposing that President Kruger does not put down the ace of trumps the day after to-morrow. In which case," he went on smiling blandly at the Baron, who smiled just as blandly in return, "we should still be in pretty much the same boat, as the English say."

"Exactly," was the quiet reply. "I should be far from questioning the fact that a diplomatist of such genius and experience as yourself, my dear host, could fail to know as much, we will say, of what I have thought it advisable to do, as I know of what the faithful servant of the Tsar has sought to do. I hope I may say without offence that whatever advantage may rest now, or hereafter, with my side will be due to the fact that it has been my good fortune to work with the best of all possible materials—which is only another and more clumsy way of putting what the Princess said so eloquently just now."

"Yes," said the Princess, throwing off the last shred of diplomatic disguise, "you, Baron, have worked with men; we have worked with machines. *Voila tout!*"

"But the day after to-morrow it will be a battle not only of men but of machines as well," said the Prince, "and on the outcome of that everything depends. It is no harm, nay, it is just as well, that we should each understand the other's position. We have spoken, I trust, not only as diplomatists but as gentlemen, and now, my dear Baron, what liqueur will you take?"

(To be continued.)



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SHORT STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "Lady Jezebel," by Fergus Hume, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. H. Knight, of Mitre Farm, Scrubbs Lane, Willesden Junction, N.W. Attempts for this week's prize must deal with FUNNY STORIES ABOUT TRAMPS, and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, June 4th, Post-cards only, please.

A New Remedy.

ABOUT ten o'clock one morning two men met and began threatening and calling each other names. One finally called the other a liar, and the two were about to grapple when a woman opened the door and said:

"Gentlemen, are you about to fight?"

"We are!" they answered together.

"Then have the kindness to wait a moment," she continued. "My husband has been ill for weeks, and is now just able to sit up. He is very downhearted this morning; and if you'll only wait till I can draw him up to the window, I know he'll be very grateful to both of you."

She disappeared into the house, and, after one look into each other's faces, the men smiled, shook hands, and departed together. H. K.

Ice that Kept a Long Time.

A CERTAIN churchwarden, who was a zealous advocate for the cause of temperance, one hot summer's day employed a carpenter to make some alteration in his dining-room. In repairing a corner near the fireplace, it was found necessary to remove the wainscot, when lo! a "treasure trove" was brought to light which astonished the workman most marvellously.

A brace of decanters, sundry bottles—all containing "something to take"—a jug, and tumblers, were cosily reposing there in snug quarters.

The joiner, with wonder-stricken countenance, ran to the proprietor with the intelligence.

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed the churchwarden. "That is curious, to be sure. Old Captain Brown must have left those things there when he occupied the premises thirty years ago."

"Perhaps he did, sir," returned the discoverer; "but that ice in the jug must have been well frozen to have remained solid so long a time."

E. A. C.

She'd Have a Strong Arm.

A GENTLEMAN was trying a horse one day in company with the owner, a professional jockey. Having driven him a mile or two, the gentleman, who noticed that he pulled pretty hard, requiring constant watching and a steady rein, said:

"Do you think that is just the horse for a lady to drive?"

"Well, sir," answered the jockey, "I must say I shouldn't want to marry the woman that could drive that horse!" R. B.

Would Your Position Require It?

"WE have spared no expense to make the place perfectly lovely and up-to-date," explained Mrs. de Cashe as she ostentatiously displayed the rings on her fingers while conducting the poor relation round the house and grounds.

"So I observe," murmured the relation abashed.

"Now this part of the grounds is reserved for the amusement of the children," continued Mrs. de Cashe. "We keep these fowls for my 'usband's 'obby. They are real Brahmas; we bought the eggs specially from Mr. Brahma and 'atched them out ourselves."

"Do they lay every day?" the relative ventured to ask.

"They could do so, of course," replied the wealthy lady, rather huffed. "But you forget that our position is such as to render that quite unnecessary, and we can afford to let them please themselves!"

And so they did!

I. N. E.

Oh, Those English!

A LONDON lady, walking in Florence, missed her purse. The suspicious movements of a man in front made her boldly demand the stolen property. Too amazed to refuse, the thief actually handed over the purse.

Indignant at such broad-day robbery, the lady stopped an elegantly-dressed gentleman, and, in excited tones, began to pour out her grievance.

Merely waiting to hear "that man stole my purse," the gallant Italian rushed after the thief, who promptly took to his heels.

They had a good run before the thief could dodge his pursuer. The sun of a summer day did not help the polite Florentine to keep cool; so, red-faced and out of breath, he turned back to meet the English lady with profuse apologies.

"Madam, I am very, very sorry. I did my best, but your purse is gone."

"Oh, no!" she replied sweetly, "I have my purse; I got it back from the man."

"Got your purse back! What did you want then?"

"Want! Why, I want justice."

It was too much, even for the proverbial Italian urbanity, and, almost choking with sudden wrath, he gasped out:

"Justice! To think that I should have run myself in a perspiration for Justice!"

M. A.

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Very Poor Playing.

A WELL-KNOWN organist once went to a distant country town to give an organ recital in a new church. The organ-blower was a stout old man, who evidently felt all the importance of his own share of the proceeding.

He confided to a friend a fear that he might not be able to give the great player wind enough, and the friend encouraged him as well as he could. When the recital was over he approached the friend and asked, "Is that really Mr. Jones?"

"Yes," he replied.

"Humph! It doesn't seem to me that he's sich a great player as they makes out."

"Why not?"

"Well, sir, he doesn't use no more wind than the gent what plays here every Sunday."

K. H.

Abusing a Duke.

THE Duke of Norfolk is exceedingly fond of relating the following tale:

He entertained an excursion party from London some twelve hundred strong, at Arundel, and presided over the dinner. Before dinner an amusing incident occurred. Warnings to keep off the grass were much in existence and were much obeyed. One person, in a soft felt hat and reefer jacket, was observed crossing the sward.

"Come off the grass!" said a woman sharply. "'Tis the likes of you that gets poor people a bad name. Can't you see it's forbidden?"

The person went on smiling, but the woman's surprise was laughable to see when she found at the dinner she had been abusing the Duke himself.

How They Educate Boys.

ONE cannot be surprised at the slow progress of education in certain parts of the United States, when a visitor to Arkansas recently heard a rural school-teacher say to his pupil:

"Come, come, you boys, can't you sit up a little more erecter?"

And when a tardy pupil came in and left the door slightly ajar, the teacher said sharply:

"You go back and shev that there door shet!" after which he said apologetically to the visitor:

"I try to learn 'em manners, but it's tremendous uphill work." J. C. T.

The Driver Didn't Pay Toll.

AN Irishman, who traded in small ware, kept a donkey-cart, with which he visited the different villages. On one occasion he came to a bridge where a toll was levied.

He found to his disappointment he had not enough money to pay it.

A bright thought struck him. He unharnessed the donkey and put it into the cart. Then getting between the shafts himself, he pulled the cart with the donkey standing in it on to the bridge.

In due course he was hailed by the toll-collector.

"Hey, man," cried the latter, "whaur's your toll?"

"Begorra," said the Irishman, "just ask the droiver."

Hopping.

AMONGST the poor East-enders who went down hopping last season to a village in Kent, was an old woman who had lost a leg.

When she had finished her shopping one Saturday night, she asked the grocer if he would wait for the money until she had done hopping, to which he readily agreed.

When, however, at the end of the season, he saw her stumping by the shop, he rushed out, saying:

"Now, then, missus, come and pay your bill."

"Not yet awhile," she said with a grin, as she proceeded on her way, "you can see plain enough that I ain't done hopping yet." S. W.

What He Was Working For.

"It's mighty busy ye are, Mike!" exclaimed his friend Brady, lounging against the ramshackle counter of the little bootmaker's shop. "Ye seem to have plenty of jobs in hand, and ye're workin' at 'em as though tomorrow was the beginning of eternity and ye wanted to finish up before ye went."

"Whist! Don't shtop me!" cried Mike. "Oi want to finish these as quick as Oi can; if Oi don't make haste, sure Patsy Malone will be back before Oi'm done."

"What's he got to do wid it, Mike?" asked Brady. "Oi thought ye was bound over to keep the peace wid Malone. Twinty shillin's, wasn't it?"

"Yis, that's what Oi'm working so hard for!"

"How's that?"

"Whin Oi've done these jobs Oi'll have saved twinty shillin's, and, be jabers! Oi don't want Malone to come back before Oi'm ready to pay a foine, for Oi mean to break the peace as soon as Oi set eyes on him!"

And he worked away with redoubled energy.

M. W.

Improved That Piano.

ENTERING a music shop the other day, a Welsh miner, who had lately come into a considerable sum of money, asked the price of a grand piano. He was told it was fifty pounds.

He bought it.

A fortnight after he returned for a music book, and the shopman asked him if the instrument gave satisfaction.

"Man," he said, "you wouldn't know it now. It just looks splendid! My old 'ooman has painted it yeller to match the chest of drawers!" T. O'B.

A Generous Tip.

A CERTAIN minister lecturing on his visit to the Holy Land, said while he was there he went into the King's gardens. As he was coming out again he thought he would give the guard at the gate a tip, and taking a coin out of his purse he offered it to him.

To his surprise, however, the guard would not have it, and he had to take it back again.

When he got back to his guide he said:

"I have been in the King's gardens and I offered the guard this coin, but he would not have it. How much is it worth?"

On seeing the coin the guide laughed and said:

"Why it takes four to make a halfpenny."

M. A. M.

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PLAYING FOR LIFE.

It used to be said of Harry Morton that the only good point about him was his love of music. His father was a very wealthy man who had gained his money by shrewd, yet daring, business speculation—a man of considerable intelligence and force of character; Harry was the only child and his father had set great hopes upon his becoming a brilliant man, but in this he had been disappointed.

Mr. Morton left out of his calculations—which was rather strange for such a man—the fact that his son would not have the same incentive as himself; he had been poor, Harry was born to riches.

Harry Morton grew up careless and rather indolent; he had plenty of money and it seemed to him that his sole object in life was to spend that money. He did nothing in particular at school, and when he left the university he travelled hither and thither, in various parts of the world, enjoying himself to the full. Yet it must be stated to his credit that he was not bad and did nothing dishonourable.

He had the gift of music in no small degree, his favourite instrument being the violin. He could play that as only a few people could ever hope to do. He gave a lot of money for an old violin which was said to be a "Strad,"—perhaps it was, but expert opinion was divided on the subject. This violin he carried with him wherever he went.

The last journey on which the violin accompanied him was a tour in Greece. He had not "done" the land of Hellenes and it occurred to him that this would be a desirable way of spending a few weeks. It was on this journey that an adventure befel him which made his "Strad" more dear to him than ever—a companion never to be parted with while he lived.

Having seen the sights of Athens and other well-known parts of the country, he followed his usual custom of plunging into the less frequented districts. "Seeing the native article," he called it, and it gave him pleasure to astonish them by ordering all sorts of things which he knew they could not supply and "making a dust" generally.

He did this one evening in a lonely village in which he found himself at sunset. He wanted shelter for the night, and he applied to the owner of what appeared to be an inn for a supper and a bed. The place was little more than a hovel and by no means so clean as it ought to have been, but Morton had had to put up with this kind of thing on several occasions and he was prepared to do the same now. He had picked up some words and phrases of the language and was able to make himself understood sufficiently for his purpose.

In reply to his request, the host, who had been lounging at the door, ushered him into a small room, and bade him be seated while the meal and the bed were being got ready.

The man, although not exactly prepossessing in appearance, was not a bad-looking fellow and was apparently quite won over by the gift of a cigar of an excellent brand. He looked perplexed at first when Morton detailed the kind of supper he wished to have, and then he smiled.

"Does the gentleman suppose that such viands are to be obtained in this poor place?" he asked in a mixture of Greek and bad French.

"Oh, you speak French, do you? Well, get me the best supper you can; I can afford to pay for it. And let the bed be clean and comfortable," said Morton in French.

The man promised to do his best and retired. Harry, left to himself, puffed thoughtfully at his cigar and allowed his mind to wander far from his present surroundings.

The supper that was brought to him was not particularly to his liking although it may have been the best that the man could procure; but Morton was decidedly hungry and this enabled him to enjoy it far more than some of his fastidious London friends would have believed.

He ate the supper in solitude, listening now and again to the sounds of voices which came from another room. He could distinguish that these were the voices of his host, a woman and a girl or younger

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woman; the words were not sufficiently distinct for him to catch many of them, and his knowledge of the language was so limited that even those which he did hear were of little value in indicating the drift of the conversation. Still, he caught the words "rich" and "Englishman" and one or two others which suggested that they were referring to him.

When he had finished he knocked his knife against a glass as a signal that he wished to have the things cleared away. In response to this "ring" the door opened, and a girl of about seventeen years entered the room.

"Does monsieur require anything more?" asked the girl in halting French.

"Nothing more, mademoiselle," answered Morton, looking at her in surprise and admiration. "Where did you learn French?" (and he added to himself) "By Jove, that girl will be a beauty some day!"

"We lived in France for about a year, monsieur," responded the girl simply.

"And why did you come back to this place?" inquired Morton, forgetting that it was no business of his.

The girl looked slightly confused; by the flickering light of the lamp he could see that she coloured slightly.

"My uncle's business was finished and—and he came here," she replied after a pause. "Monsieur is English?"

"Yes."

"Ah, the English are rich and can travel; they can see everything and have everything. It is nice to be rich, but it is dangerous sometimes." And she hurriedly gathered up the supper things and took them away, leaving Morton somewhat puzzled concerning her meaning.

When next she appeared, which was about five minutes later, he had another question to ask.

"Who is that playing the violin? He is not much of a player and the instrument isn't worth a rap, but he is bringing music out of it all the same. Who is it?"

"My uncle. He is very fond of music; it is the only thing that softens him and——"

She stopped abruptly and Morton smiled significantly.

"His reputation is not of the best, I fancy," he remarked quietly. "His face is not unpleasant and he can make it look agreeable, but there is an expression in his eyes which shows that he can be very disagreeable."

The girl shot a swift glance at him and smiled expressively. The frank speech and easy manner of the guest charmed her to the point of speaking openly.

"He is a bad man, and he treats my aunt and me shamefully at times. People say he has done wicked things; it is well to keep one's bedroom door locked. Monsieur is a musician also," she added quickly, pointing to the violin case, with the evident intention of changing the conversation.

Harry replied in the affirmative and inquired when his bed would be ready; the girl replied that the room would be at his disposal within fifteen minutes and then left him.

Kardanes, the host, knocked at the door a quarter of an hour later and informed him that the room was ready, Morton followed him along a passage and up a flight of twelve stairs to a room which was to be his resting place for the night.

Morton had been pondering on the remark of Anita about riches being sometimes a danger, and this made him see evil designs in the countenance of the man who was now smiling and bowing before him.

"You will call me in good time to-morrow morning," requested the young man. "I must set out early, as I have to meet some friends a few miles from here."

"Certainly, monsieur," was the smiling reply. "Monsieur has been travelling alone for some days?"

Morton pretended to be occupied with a survey of the room and ignored this question, which seemed to have a sinister meaning.

Finding that no answer was given, Kardanes placed the lamp on a table near the little window and left the room. When the door closed behind him, Harry locked it and seated himself on the bed.

"Nice place, this," he mused. "Window barred, so no one can get in that way. I have locked the door, but I will push a table against it to make sure. Then I think I shall be safe with my revolver close at hand."

He felt for the weapon, and then uttered an exclamation of annoyance; he remembered having displayed it ostentatiously on the evening before, when he placed it on a table in his bedroom, at his previous stopping-place. It was evident that he had quite forgotten it and had left it there.

But Morton was no coward and he did not allow this to worry him; moreover, he was very tired, and he was pretty certain that no one could get into the room without disturbing him. He sat down on the bed to think; he remembered lying down, as being the more easy posture for the proper flow of thought; and that was all he did remember for some time until he was aroused by a touch.

His first impulse was to throw aside that hand that was on his shoulder—at first it seemed that it was about his throat—and spring to his feet; but he was restrained by the sounds of Anita's voice uttering words of warning in a low tone.

"Hush! You are in danger. I have come to warn you. He knows that you have money and he is not scrupulous. He has made up his mind to have that money, even if he has to take your life. I suspected it while you were at supper, and when you had retired and I was sent to bed, I crept downstairs and heard them talking about you. You must escape!"

Morton sat up on the bed and looked round the room.

"How did you get in?" he asked. "I locked the door and placed the table against it."

"There is another door. I came that way, he will come also. He has blocked the proper door on the outside so that you cannot escape through that," returned Anita hurriedly and anxiously. "There is only one way to get out of this room, and that is by the secret door. Oh, make haste, make haste! If you do not pass through the door and the corridor before he reaches the other end, you will have no chance, for he is armed and you—you have no arms, have you?"

"No," answered Morton, now fully awake to his danger, "but I shall not fall an easy victim to that rascal even though I have no firearm. And he would not dare——"

"He would not hesitate to shoot," Anita assured him, clasping her hands in an agony of mind. "If people hear the noise, what does that matter in this place? He can leave here, if necessary, as he left the little French village. Oh, make haste!"

Morton felt now that there was no time to lose if he wished to avoid an encounter in which he would most

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probably be worsted. He started to his feet, caught up his violin case and other belongings, and was about to step toward the secret door with Anita when the latter stopped short with a low cry.

"He is coming; it is too late!"

Morton listened and heard a stealthy footstep. Two considerations flashed though his mind; Anita's safety and his own—for he felt that the girl would suffer for her interference. What was to be done?

"Quick!" cried Anita as an inspiration came to her. "Play, play! That violin is your best weapon of defence against him!"

Morton grasped the idea at once.

Dropping his other things, he hastily opened the case and took out his beloved instrument. With skilled fingers he tightened the strings and ran the bow lightly over them; then, having satisfied himself that the instrument was ready for use, he began to play one of the most popular of the Greek national melodies which he had learnt in Athens.

He played with more earnestness than ever before; he threw his whole soul into that air and all his skill and natural talent into the proper rendering of it. So engrossed was he in his task that he only dimly remembered the fact that a would-be murderer was approaching his room and that the next few minutes might be his last.

He did not notice Anita—he was unconscious for the time of her presence; he did not know that she had crouched behind the door through which her uncle would enter.

The national melody was followed by a favourite Italian air and still the young traveller played on. Anita, who was listening with bated breath, herself enchanted by the glorious music that was being drawn from the old violin, heard the stealthy footsteps approach nearer and nearer and asked herself, whether this strange weapon of defiance would prove effective.

The footsteps became slower and slower until the door was reached and then they stopped. Anita's heart beat violently as she waited for what might follow. Would Kardanes enter, filled with deadly intent or would he be touched by the music and turned from his diabolical design?

The moments passed and the door was not opened. To Anita those few seconds were an age of anxiety; to Morton they were of less importance, for he had almost forgotten in his love of music why he had begun to play.

The door moved and Anita cowered still lower and breathed a prayer for help. The plan had failed, and in a moment she would hear the report of a pistol and see the young Englishman fall to the ground, dead or dying!

The door opened to about one third of its width and a face peered in. The lamp was still burning and Anita saw her uncle's visage, but oh! how changed. Intead of the very picture of evil which she had expected, she saw a face lighted up with an almost divine expression, and she knew that Morton was safe and that music had once more exerted its grand influence for good.

After one long, intense look at the violinist, Kardanes—revolver in hand—stepped softly back into the corridor, closing the door gently behind him. Anita heard his retreating footsteps as he went slowly back, and when she knew that he had reached the end of the passage she stood up with a long drawn sigh and stole away in the same direction.

* * * * *

It was quite half-an-hour afterwards before Morton ceased playing and looked about him.

Anita was gone, he heard no sound and saw no sign of danger.

He passed his hand over his forehead and asked himself if he had been dreaming, but without being able to answer the question satisfactorily. Then he threw himself on the bed in a semi-conscious condition and lay thus until he was aroused about six o'clock by a knock at his door.

It was the summons to breakfast.

He did not see Kardanes again; Anita informed him that her uncle was busy at the back. Morton took the opportunity to thank her with heartful sincerity for her help and having received an assurance that she was in no danger on that account—her uncle not having seen her, he gave her his card and begged her to write to him whenever she needed assistance. He tried to press some money into her hand, but she refused it.

* * * * *

He heard from her about three years later; her uncle was dead, and she was engaged as maid to an English lady resident in Athens.

Morton has settled down since then, and among his most cherished possessions is the old fiddle which stood him in such good stead on the night when his life was threatened by Kardanes.

W. T. H.

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SOME INCIDENTS OF PRAIRIE LIFE.

In the old days of the overland trail, the pony express and the lumbering stagecoach, stage stations had been erected at a distance of fifteen miles apart throughout the length of the whole trail. After the first thirty miles from the Missouri river no coach was safe from attack until it reached San Francisco.

It was a misnomer to say the stations were "erected." Most of them were dug-outs—that is, a hole or cellar four or five feet deep was dug and then covered with slabs of timber to support two feet of dirt. The stables were made in the same way, while the hay was stacked.

There was generally an underground passage leading from the house to the stables. House and stables were loopholed for rifles, the doors constructed of timber or covered with boiler iron, and there was not one of them which was not attacked a dozen times over.

The Indians could not use fire as a weapon, nor could they carry a station by assault, but they captured many of them by trickery or siege. In no case was the life of a company employee ever spared.

The distance between stations, with the feeble garrison maintained at each, prevented any hope of relief in case of attack. Indeed the orders were:

"Defend your own station. Only the last man alive is to break through the Indians if he can."

Never were greater hardihood and bravery exhibited than by the men selected to drive the coaches. Knowing what the risks were, it seems strange that any passengers could have been found to fill them, but in the last two years preceding the opening of the Pacific road the coaches averaged five passengers each way, and many of these were women.

At a few points on the long route a guard rode for a few miles with the coaches, but for most of the distance the driver and passengers must take care of themselves.

There was hardly a week without its tragedy. As the stage toiled through the heavy sands of some strip of desert, or met several miles of stony and up hill trail, a band of a hundred yelling warriors would suddenly appear.

The driver must fight as well as guide his excited team. The passengers fired from the open doors, and if the attack were beaten off it was a case of luck.

It was when the Overland company finally appealed to the government to clear its route through Kansas, that General Custer was sent out with a brigade of troopers.

Fourteen stations had been attacked and wiped out, and stages had ceased to run over a distance of almost 200 miles. Custer could not hope to strike a telling blow against the hordes in the field, but he laid his plans to open the route and drive the Indians back from it.

As we followed the trail to the west we passed station after station showing gruesome sights. In each and every case a stout defence had been made, but the Indians had prevailed.

Kegs of powder had been used to blow open the doors or tear out the roofs, and even though the warriors had lost ten to one they had destroyed the station. Burning Hill was a relay station, with eight men to guard it and care for the extra horses.

The last stage from the east had come in after a race of five miles, with the driver and three male passengers wounded—some of them twice and three times. It was one of the largest and most defensible stations on the route, and there was no thought of anything but beating the Indians off, no matter what their force.

Custer's whole command witnessed the arrival of the last stage from the west, the last for several weeks. From a hilltop three miles from the trail, with impassable gullies between, we saw the coach come up the trail with 100 Indians pursuing it. It was a running fight, which aroused every man to the highest pitch of excitement, but we were helpless to extend aid.

Through the clear air of a summer's afternoon we saw the stage horses shot down and the coach overtaken.

The passengers made a brave fight to the last, but not one of them escaped.

It was night before we had made our detour and reached the station, and the Indians had departed long before.

They had captured the station two hours before they attacked the stage. It had held out against them for three days, and it was not until forty Indians had been killed or wounded that they got possession of it by digging under the walls and using a keg of powder.

If Burning Hill had failed to hold out, how would it be with Pawnee Flat, the next station to the west, and with White Horse, the next after that? The first was a four man station and the next a relay with eight.

As we rode away through the night not a man had the slightest hope for Pawnee, though we knew it would have been defended as long as one of the four could lift a gun.

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We reached it at about eleven o'clock. It was as we had feared. Over two hundred Indians had swarmed down out of the hills at daybreak the morning before, and, though they had lost a score of men, the dug-out had been carried by assault and its defenders butchered.

We waited here half an hour to give the poor corpses burial and then pushed on towards White Horse.

It was not until we got within two miles of the station that our fears were relieved. Then we heard the reports of rifles and knew that the place was still holding out.

The station was situated about midway up a long, bare hill. To the west of it was a coulee, or dry ravine, with banks twenty feet high.

We had with us a couple of scouts who knew every rod of the overland trail, and when within a mile of the station, these men were sent forward to spy out the situation.

They returned after awhile to report that Spotted Horse and about a hundred and fifty of his "dog soldiers," as the Cheyennes were called, were laying siege to the station and had evidently occupied the ground for two or three days.

The ground round the dug-out was so open that the Indians dared not "rush" the place, nor was there any show to use a keg of powder without reckless exposure. With their allies holding the trail to the east, the Cheyennes had entered upon a siege in hopes to starve the employees out.

Their war ponies and most of the band were lying up in the dry ravine for the night. This ravine had no opening to the south and was therefore a *cul de sac*.

The first signs of dawn were in the sky when we saddled up, mounted, and the whole of us pushed forward, led by the scouts, for the mouth of the ravine.

We had the Spencer carbines, each with a full magazine, and as we got the order to charge each man began shooting. When a carbine was empty, it was thrown away and a revolver used in its place. When the revolver was empty, it was cast aside for the sabre.

Extended from bank to bank, we swept up the ravine, and we had nothing to do but kill. Taken by surprise, the Cheyennes thought only of getting away.

We had scarcely got to work when the eight men who had been cooped up in the dug-out sallied out to take a hand in the fight, and it was made the saddest sunrise the Cheyennes tribe had ever seen.

Not a pony could escape out of that trap. Numbers of the warriors scrambled up the banks and got safely away, but nearly every one left his weapons behind.

The fight did not last above thirty minutes, and our loss was only three men wounded.

Down in that ravine we harvested seventy-eight dead Indians, and on the banks above the stage men counted twenty-two more. We got upwards of a hundred rifles, about fifty pistols, one hundred and thirty ponies and a wagon load of miscellaneous stuff.

Every Indian lying there was a dead one. Custer had said: "Shoot to kill," and there were no wounded or prisoners.

Among the killed were Spotted Horse, Big Moon and White Bird, and that fight broke the backbone of the Cheyenne nation.

Their part in the war was to capture all the stations west of Burning Hill, but they had only taken Pawnee Flat. They never rode to war again.

Within a week they were suing for peace, and they were the first to be gathered on a reservation.

C. B. LEWIS.

NO ONE KNOWS

When the War Will End, But——

£250 will be given to the reader of PEARSON'S WEEKLY from whom we receive a Coupon bearing the exact date upon which the

BRITISH FLAG WILL BE OFFICIALLY HOISTED IN PRETORIA.

ALL YOU HAVE TO DO.

Fill in the coupon below.

Send it in to us as soon as you like.

Send as many coupons as you like.

If two competitors name the exact day the money will go to the one who gives the correct hour of that day. If two or more give the correct day and hour the £250 in full will go to him whose coupon we received bearing the earliest date of sending in. Pretoria time, which is about an hour and three quarters in advance of English time, must be stated.

The Editor's decision must be final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding.

The Editor reserves the right to close this competition at a day's notice.

Address all envelopes to "War Editor," Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Pretoria Coupon. S.S.] June 2, 1900. Date of Writing .....

Name.....

Address .....

.....

.....

Day..... Hour..... (Pretoria Time.)

This notice and coupon also appears every week in the ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY NEWS, HOME NOTES, THE SUNDAY READER, PEARSON'S WEEKLY, and the BIG BUDGET.

Readers of SHORT STORIES may enter with this Coupon.

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SULPHOLINE LOTION,

For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

SHILLING BOTTLES.

IMPORTANT TO WEAK MEN

And those suffering from nervous exhaustion, loss of vigour, Varicocele, &c., can be successfully and permanently cured without operation or detention from business by THE DR. COLLINS most improved and rational method medical science has ever yet produced.

Particulars and proofs of successful cures sent free on receipt of address.

THE COLLINS REMEDY CO.,
Gothic House, 9 Erskine Street, Liverpool.

WHY BE FAT?

When a lady, who has discovered a simple means of Self-Cure will be happy to send particulars of same to any sufferer from this distressing complaint. Free on receipt of stamped addressed envelope. ADDRESS:

Mrs. TREVOR WELLS,
63 *HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON, W.C.*

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

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GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

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JUNO CYCLES FOR LADIES & GENTS.

THE VERY BEST.
FREE or FIXED WHEELS
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£8 10s. ...	14/2
£11 11s. ...	19/3
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£12 12s. ...	21/-
£14 14s. ...	24/6

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Write for New Season's List.

JUNO Cycles and Accessories (over 100 pages) sent Post Free.

JUNO ... ... £10 ... 16/8 monthly.
Lady Safety ... £11 ... 18/4 monthly.

Leatherly Hard Wood Cycle Stand, 2/6. Handlebar Basket, 1/-

METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS CO. LTD., Juno Cycle School, and Wcrks, 75, 76 Bishopsgate Street Without E.C., and Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

DRUNKENNESS

CURED. This can be done with or without patient's knowledge. Send me a stamp and I will tell you how. (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Mrs. C. H. (Room 8), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

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KILLS BLACKBEETLES & FLEAS
Tins 3d., 6d. & 1/-

ESTABLISHED 1851.

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Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.

2% on CURRENT ACCOUNTS, on the minimum monthly balances when not drawn below £100.

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free. FRANCIS RAVENSCROFT, *Manager*.

TOO STOUT

I was for years; by chance I came across a simple home remedy that reduced me from 17st. to 10st. 12lb., and I will willingly send particulars free to any sufferer enclosing stamp. Mrs. L. E. FELL, 195 Oxford Street, London W.

VARICOCELE.

Every man suffering from Varicocele and the allied troubles, should send for treatise, describing their Causes, Symptoms, Results, and Successful and Painless Treatment without surgical operation or the use of cumbersome trusses and electrical appliances. Will be sent sealed, post free, three stamps.

S. S. MURRAY,
7 Southampton Row, London, W.C.

HAIR DESTROYED.

Send me an envelope (stamped and addressed) and I will tell you how to remove all superfluous hair free of charge. (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Miss E. V. (Room 3), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

SILVER QUEEN & ROYAL AJAX CYCLES

ON MONTHLY PAYMENTS. Enormous stock. New and second-hand. FROM 10s. MONTHLY. Carriage paid. Free wheels and rim brakes. Illustrated Price List Post Free.—THE SILVER QUEEN CYCLE CO. LTD., 221 Tottenham Court Road, London, W.

To Economical Mothers!
FOR HOME DYEING

MAYPOLE SOAP

No Mess — No Trouble

DYES
CURTAINS, FROCKS, SILKS, SATINS
COTTONS & in fact EVERYTHING
COLOURS 4d. BLACK 6d.

Sample Free on receipt of 1½d. for postage.

ASK FOR "WHITE LABEL" WORCESTERSHIRE SAUCE AN "OLD" SAUCE

MELLOWED AND SOFTENED LIKE OLD WINE BY LONG AND CAREFUL STORAGE

J. A. SHARWOOD & Co LTD PROPRIETORS LONDON

"WORTH A GUINEA A BOX."

BEECHAM'S PILLS

FOR ALL

BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS,
Sick Headache, Constipation, Wind and Pains in Stomach, Impaired Digestion, Disordered Liver, and Female Ailments.

SALE OVER SIX MILLION BOXES YEARLY.

In Boxes, 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.

Prepared only by the Proprietor,

THOMAS BEECHAM, St. Helens, Lancashire.

Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine Dealers everywhere.

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THE BRAIN GYMNASIUM

IN these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, SHORT STORIES, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by first post on Monday, June 11th, 1900.

No. 130.

HALF an inch before the trees, and half a foot and half a yard after them, leads to an English town. What is it?

No. 131.

WHAT sentence is this?

GROUND
TURN EVIL STAR.

No. 132.

TAKE one word from each line of the following rhyme, and you'll find a proverb:

Two children bend above a book,
Their curly heads together look,
And are the wonders that they spy
Better revealed to childish eye
Than to some solitary drone,
One who, alas! is older grown?

No. 133.

FORM a square word with the equivalents of the following:

TO LISTEN
COMFORT
POISONOUS SNAKES
REMAINDER

No. 134.

My first is in parson, but not in the church,
My second in alder, but never in birch,
My third is in stone, though nowhere in rock,
My fourth is in stocking, but never in sock,
My fifth is in merriment, but not in fun,
My sixth is in pancake and also in bun,
My seventh in coal is, but never in wood,
My eighth is in evil, but never in good,
I think very soon this enigma you'll guess,
My whole is a virtue we all should possess.

No. 135.

My FIRST, a home to weary man
By care and toil oppressed,
A haven from domestic strife
Of peaceful calm and rest.

For when with FIRST man's better half
Tries to lay down my LAST,
To FIRST he hies and shelters there
Until the storm has passed.

Although my LAST alone implies
Both order, power, and right,
When with my FIRST my LAST is joined,
Disorder comes to light.

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Nos. 106 to 111.

THE prize of £2 has been awarded this week to Mr. J. Ellis, G.I., A2 room, Whale Island, Portsmouth, whose attempt was the first correct one dealt with.

Each of the following have been awarded a copy of "Master Key," by Florence Warden:

Miss E. Francis, 9 Rue Pasteur, Nimes, Gard, France.
P. J. Murray, 61 Boleyn Road, Forest Gate, E.
E. Gregory, 47 Barlow Road, Levenshulme.
Miss F. Tylcoat, 123 Chester Terrace, Preston Park, Brighton.
Benjamin Hammond, 11 North Road, Brighton.
John Forbes, 13 Waverley Gardens, Crossingloof, Glasgow.
P. Jones, Beechholm, Woodend Park, Grassendale.
J. B. Johnson, 91 Park Road East, Birkenhead.
E. M. Jay, 92 Fairbridge Road, Upper Holloway, N.
John McMillan, 126 Crown Street, Aberdeen.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES.

Nos. 112 to 117.

No. 112. SPARROW.

No. 113.

I R O N
R A G E
O G R E
N E E D

No. 114. Meat and onions (and on i on s).

No. 115. IT—ME. TIME.

No. 116. Not a nobleman (using no *ble*).

No. 117.

A S P
SEA W EED
BL A ME
O N E
PA S TE
IM P E RIL
M A D

SHORT STORIES ADVERTISEMENT RATES.

Single column, per inch, per insertion	£0 10 0
Double " "	1 0 0
Full page inside, facing page of matter, either white paper or 2nd or 3rd page of cover, or back page, per insertion	10 0 0
Half-page " " "	5 0 0
Quarter-page " "	2 10 0
Eighth-page " "	1 5 0
Front page, whole " "	12 10 0
" half	6 5 0

All spaces above one-eighth of a page are charged at per page rate. Series discount: 5 per cent. for 13, 10 per cent. for 26, 15 per cent. for 52 insertions.

Black blocks are charged 25 per cent. extra. All advertisements are subject to approval. All copy must be sent in by Noon on Tuesday, June 5th, if intended for the issue on sale June 19th, and dated June 23rd. The Proprietors reserve the right to hold over or suspend the insertion of any advertisement without prejudice to other insertions on order. All communications should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, "Pearson's Weekly" Offices, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Printed and Published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., at Pearson's Weekly Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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ALL IS BETTER THAN PART.

A CERTAIN beautiful and intelligent woman, whom the present writer knows, had the misfortune in her youth to receive an injury to the right leg which threatened to make her permanently lame. After long and careful treatment, the surgeons were compelled to take this view; and she and her friends reluctantly looked at the matter in the same light. There were facts in the case that rendered such a fate exceedingly painful for her. At the time of the accident she had bright prospects, socially, and was affianced to a young man in every way worthy of her. She assured him of her willingness, under the circumstances, to cancel the engagement, but, true and sensible fellow that he was, he would not hear of it, and—as I make this note of the facts—they have now lived a happy married life for twenty years.

Recently, on my asking whether she had found her disability as serious an obstacle to her enjoyment as she once feared, she answered, "It comes to this: When I had made up my mind to be a cripple all my days I recovered to a good degree my cheerfulness, and have since got on fairly well."

"But——?" queried the biographer, with lifted eyelids.

"Yes," she responded, sadly, "there is always that; always the thought of *what might have been.*"

Still, she is a brave lady; she doesn't complain. She knows her case is only one out of millions. For some reason or other, the great majority of us have to accept from ten to fifteen shillings in the pound out of what is really due to us.

"Although not laid up," writes another woman, with a variation of the main theme, "I continued in this low state year after year. I was never critically ill, yet I never knew what it was to be properly well.

"My ailment, whatever it was, first came upon me in the early part of 1887. It was then I began to feel low, weak, and out of sorts. I experienced much pain and a sense of weight at the right side, and feared I might have liver complaint. My appetite dwindled away until I had scarcely any real relish for food. And after eating—even plain and simple things—I had a feeling of distress and sickness.

"My sleep became fitful and broken. I seldom got anything like a good night's rest, and rose in the morning worn out and exhausted. With this my strength declined until, through weakness, I could hardly get about. Although not laid up, I continued in this low state year after year. I was never critically ill, yet I never knew what it was to be properly well.

"I consulted doctors and went to the Middlesex Hospital, also the University Hospital; but from first to last I found no actual benefit from their treatment.

"In September last (1897), having heard of the good done by Mother Seigel's Syrup, particularly in diseases of the stomach and digestive organs, I concluded to lay aside other medicines and try this one. I procured a bottle from Mr. S. Rogers, Chemist, in Crowndale Road, and after taking it found myself greatly improved. It seemed to drive away all my wretched, languid feelings. My appetite then returned and I began to gain strength. The benefit continued, and after using this remedy a short time longer I was better than I had been for years. I now keep Mother Seigel's Syrup at hand, and if I ail anything, a few doses set me right. For the information of others, I am willing you should publish my letter if you wish. — Mrs. Louisa Goodin, 39 Allcroft Road, Kentish Town, London, N.W., Jan 19th, 1898."

To be resigned and comparatively content under life-long lameness is rational and philosophical. Blessed indeed are they who make the best of an irremediable calamity. Wonderful exhibitions of the highest traits of human nature are seen under those conditions. But most of us prefer a normal existence, with all our faculties and powers at command. Two good legs are better than one good leg and a crutch; and perfect health is better than chronic illness *plus* a chastened spirit. And one of the functions of Mother Seigel's Syrup is to restore to sound health those who have been living, as Mrs. Goodin did, neither quite in bed nor quite out of it. Don't rest resigned to a half-and-half life now you have learned how to get your full inheritance.

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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'COMPO' WASHES EVERYTHING.

To be had from all Grocers, Stores, &c.

Ask Your Neighbour

whose house is conspicuously clean, whose work worries her least, whose leisure time is greatest. How she manages. She will say—"I do all my cleaning with:- "COMPO."

'COMPO' WASHES EVERYTHING.

Manufactory: DUKINFIELD, MANCHESTER.

Chocolat Kohler

PERFECT IN FLAVOUR AND QUALITY.

London Depot: 96 Queen Street, Cheapside.

"OROCO" TABLE MATS.

10 for ONE SHILLING Post Free.

Consisting of Six Plate sizes. Two Meat Dish and Two Vegetable Dish.

An Elegant Table Decoration, a Perfect Protection from Hot Dishes and Plates.

"OROCO SOX"

KEEP THE FEET DRY AND PREVENT FATIGUE.

18 PAIRS FOR 1/-

"OROCO" MANUFACTURING CO., WIGAN.

ZEBRA Grate Polish

No Hard Work.

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FINEST "S.S." SAILING ON THE SEA OF LITERATURE.

SHORT STORIES

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN

No. 597. FOR WEEK ENDING JUNE 9TH, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

TAKE CARE

when drinking Cocoa to have the pure article only, as many so-called "Pure" Cocoas contain added matter that is not only unnecessary, but often positively harmful.

CADBURY'S

COCOA

IS ABSOLUTELY PURE

And untampered with, and can be taken with the greatest benefit in Childhood, in Youth, or in Old Age.

THE BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL—Article on "Drugged Foods," June 4th, 1898—says:

"There is a general concensus of opinion that the addition of active drugs, belonging to the classes of nervine stimulants to beverages and articles of dietary in ordinary domestic use is not for the benefit of the community, and is likely in time to produce a deterioration of the public health. . . At the present moment we are beset by another danger arising from the addition of kola to certain articles of food. . . Kola has been found on analysis to contain 2·13 per cent. of caffeine. Caffeine is undoubtedly a useful drug when employed in suitable cases and in appropriate doses, but if taken habitually in large quantities it is capable of inducing an undesirable condition of over-stimulation of the nerve centres."

When asking for Cocoa, insist on having CADBURY'S—Sold only in Packets and Tins—as other Cocoas are sometimes substituted for the sake of extra profit.

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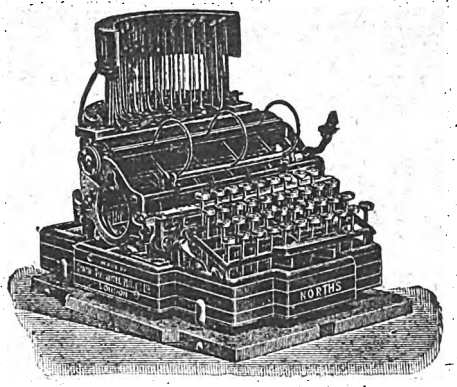
THE PREMIER MACHINE OF ENGLISH MAKE.



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Prepared only by the Proprietor,

THOMAS BEECHAM, St. Helens, Lancashire.

Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine Dealers everywhere.

DRUNKENNESS

CURED. This can be done with or without patient's knowledge. Send me a stamp and I will tell you how. (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Mrs. C. H. (Room 8), 195 Oxford Street London, W.

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DEVONSHIRE CREAM

(Really Genuine.) In Patent Air-tight Tins. ½-lb., 1/4; 1-lb., 2/4; 2-lb., 4/-, including Tin and Postage.

Mrs. Conyers,
MORCHARD BISHOP, DEVON.

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SILK HANDKERCHIEFS,

23 by 23, Grand Value; with Latest PORTRAIT of QUEEN and LORD ROBERTS; also KIPLING'S Famous POEM (with music), and a beautifully-complete MAP of SOUTH AFRICA; price 1/6 post free.
M. TASSLAK, 21 Bath Street, SOUTHPORT.

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METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS CO. Ltd.
Juno Cycle School & Works, 75, 76, Bishopsgate Street, Without, E.C., and Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.

2% on CURRENT ACCOUNTS, on the minimum monthly balances when not drawn below £100.

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.

FRANCIS RAVENSCROFT, *Manager.*

SEVEN PRIZE MEDALS.

These series of pens neither scratch nor spurt. They glide over the roughest paper with the ease of a soft lead pencil. An assorted sample box for 7 stamps from the works, Birmingham.

To Economical Mothers!
FOR HOME DYEING

MAYPOLE SOAP

No Mess. No Trouble.

DYES
CURTAINS, FROCKS, SILKS, SATINS
COTTONS & In fact EVERYTHING
COLOURS 4d. BLACK 6d.

SHORT STORIES

No. 597.

For the Week Ending
June 9th, 1900.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

THE BRIDE OF THE SWORD.

"IT all happened a great many years ago, in the days of the old 'John Company,'" said the Colonel, "and the story's been told on my verandah so often since I took command of the regiment that I'm really not half sorry, you know, to think that this is about the last time that I shall be called upon to tell it. Next month the Fusiliers will have a new colonel, and upon him will devolve the duty of telling to curious strangers the story of Tommy Threapwell's bequest to the regimental mess."

The "Bhowani plate," which adorned the mess-table of the 3rd Fusiliers, was a unique example of the silversmith's art. It always stood in the place of honour—in the centre of the board, where it instantly challenged attention by the massiveness of its design; but chiefly by the suggestiveness of the subject.

A man with the look of a European, but wearing the dress of a native, and bearing in his arms a lightly clad female form, was coming out of a clump of peepul trees which overhung a pool.

The girl was clinging to him tightly, and the artist had given to her beautifully modelled features an expression of mingled love, joy, and alarm.

Threapwell had commissioned the work from one of the first silversmiths in Madras. It had been the

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attraction of his own sideboard while he lived, and when he died—men made India their home in those days—he left it to his old regiment, with the proviso that the colonel should tell the tale to every subaltern on joining, and to any guest of the mess who professed a desire to hear it.

"India," proceeded the Colonel, helping himself to another 'peg,' "is a queer country to live in to-day, even for those who think they understand her; but in the days to which my story belongs it was still queerer. Under circumstances which will come out in the narrative, it was the custom among the Brahmins to marry their daughters to the Sword of Bhowani rather than have them left on their hands unmarried, after they had reached a marriageable age. The rites were as hideous as they were profane, and, after the ceremony, the maidens were dedicated to the service of the temple. With this preface you will easily follow the story."

* * * * *

"I have ill-news for thee, sahib," said Hurree Das, setting down the breakfast tray on the small round table. "Meeran has been here, and Kummoo is gone."

He drew himself up stiffly, and stood facing his master in the attitude of attention.

Captain Threapwell threw down his pen with an oath, and looked sharply at the man.

"Gone! Gone where?" he exclaimed.

The man turned up the whites of his eyes, spread out the palms of his hands, and muttered his inability to answer.

A ship was leaving for England that afternoon, and the Captain had risen early to finish his correspondence. His native servant had just brought him the tea and toast which is the Anglo-Indian's first breakfast.

"How long have you known this, Hurree?"

"The dawn was not in the sky, my lord, when the evil tidings came unto thy servant. She went in the night. They brought a palankeen, and took her while she slept. Meeran is the bringer of the news, sahib. The girl had travelled through the darkness without stopping by the way, for she was the bearer of this letter, which Kummoo sends to thee in all haste."

The man laid before Threapwell a tiny scrap of paper in which something had evidently been hurriedly screwed up.

The Englishman opened the paper deliberately, glanced hastily at the contents, and, withdrawing a clove, a peppercorn, a leaf of basil, and a withered marigold, spread them on the table in front of him.

Writing is not included in the list of accomplishments taught to their women by the husbands and fathers of India; but the woman has never lived who cannot be trusted to find a means of communicating with her lover under circumstances which would be the despair of the ordinary male intellect.

In India the inmates of the zenana have invented the "object letter." It answers every purpose for which writing could be employed, and frequently expresses the lady's meaning in a manner far plainer than most writing would.

Threapwell was no novice in the business. Kummoo's letter was more quickly deciphered by her feringhee lover than many an elaborate composition on scented paper.

She told him that she was in despair, that she had long loved him, that he must seek her quickly; that she was to be devoted to the goddess on whose altar the leaves of the sacred Toolsee were always sprinkled.

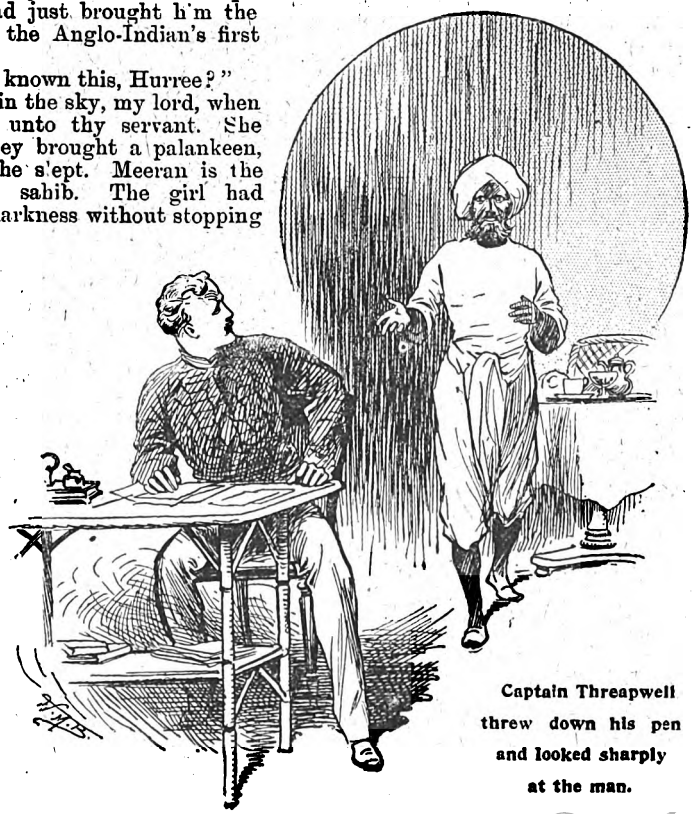
For several minutes Threapwell sat with his head in his hands, buried in thought. Suddenly he looked up. Hurree Das was still standing in deferential attitude a yard away.

"Is the girl here?" he inquired shortly.

"Meeran? No, sahib. She was afraid old Sukee would miss her. She returned while it was yet dark."

"Where have they taken her, Hurree? Where have they taken Kummoo, the sister of Motee Ram?"

"Meeran knoweth not, sahib," replied the man. "The girl was in sore distress because of her mistress, for Motee, she said, swore by the mother* that he would marry Kummoo to the Sword sooner than see her—a Brahmin girl, taken to wife by a cow-slaying infidel from over the black water—saving your presence, excellency."



Captain Threapwell threw down his pen and looked sharply at the man.

Threapwell bit his lip but said nothing. He was thinking out the situation. Kummoo, the beauty of Mundipore, for whose "dove's eyes" Tommy was willing to stake all and risk everything, was an orphan of good family. Her nearest relation was her brother, Motee Ram.

As a youth Motee had been wild and dissipated, and his character had not improved as he grew older. He was now in his twenty-fifth year, while Kummoo was just passing out of her sixteenth.

The girl's exquisite figure and peerless features had attracted many admirers amongst the crowd who thronged the steps or frequented the courts of the great Hindoo temple over

* The goddess, Kali.

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against the Sultan's palace on the Futteh Mydan, whither Kummoo was taken daily by her aunt to perform her devotions.

It was whispered cautiously by a few that Tippoo himself had seen her, and, smitten by her charms, had gone in disguise to the temple, and declared himself to the priest at the altar. Many, indeed, had been the offers made for Kummoo, but all had been refused. Gossip gave the credit to Motee. Nor was gossip far wrong.

Eager in the pursuit of pleasure, Motee was spending the mohurs left him by his venerable father at a rate which made his banker consult the young Brahmin's balance every time he fingered one of Motee's *hoondees.** Greedy, grasping, and avaricious, his sister's jewels were scarcely safe from her brother's covetous hands.

Kummoo herself was a valuable asset, and he intended her to fetch a good price. Pretty girls there might be, Motee knew several himself, but beauty such as Kummoo's only came into the marriage market at the rarest intervals, and he who wanted it must pay the figure. So the years had slipped by, and Kummoo was still unmarried at an age when it is considered a disgrace to a Brahmin girl to be unprovided with a husband. Then scandal had laid hands upon her name.

"Kummoo had an Inglecsh lover, a sahib of the 'Kompanee,' who——" But at this point the native imagination would run amok.

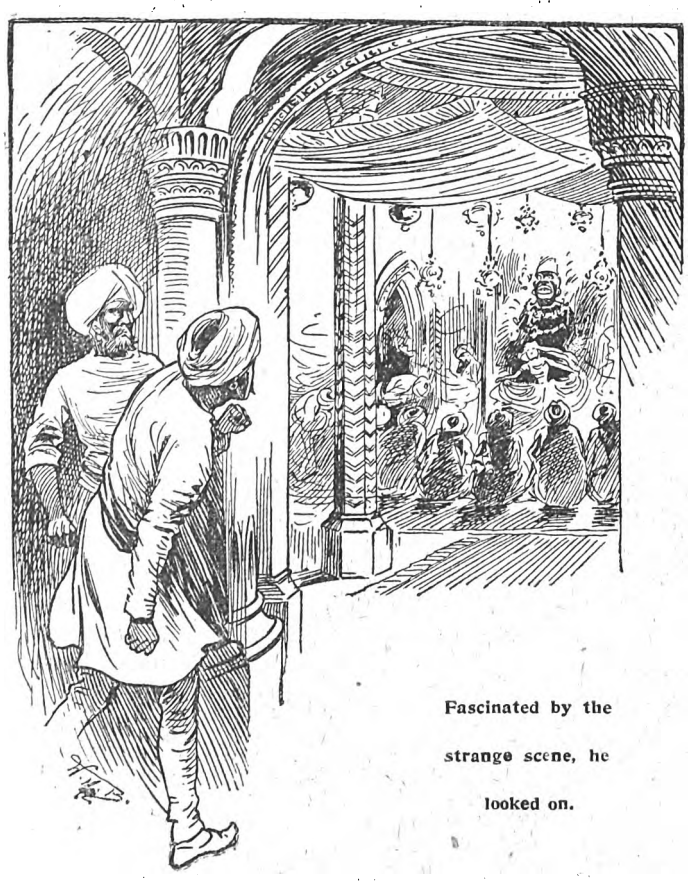
At last the ears of the chief Brahmin began to burn so hotly that Motee was sent for.

"Kummoo sixteen years old and unmarried!"

It was a scandal to the caste. If a husband were not found for her within three months it were better that she were married to the sword, and became a priestess of the goddess.

Motee had been thinking as much himself. It was the easiest way out of a difficulty that was beginning to trouble him. Tippoo was becoming importunate.

The whole business from start to finish flashed through Threapwell's mind while Hurree was pouring out his tea, and he swore a great oath that he would rescue the girl if he had to kill a sultan to do it. Taking from his pocket two gold mohurs, Tommy placed them on the table.



Fascinated by the strange scene, he looked on.

The eyes of Hurree Das glistened like diamond points.

"You know what they represent?" said Threapwell, glancing interrogatively at the bearer, and pointing with his finger at the coins. "Fifteen rupees each. Would you like to earn them? You can. You can earn two more from the same parcel if you bring me word within thirty-six hours where I can find Kummoo.

"I'm not asking you to take any risk, Hurree. Bring me word where she is, and you add sixty rupees to the hoard under the hearthstone. Is that good enough for you? I've heard the gossip in the bazaar, and I know what they're saying at the palace. She's in one of your vile temples where they'll work upon her with their devilry, and persuade her to accept service. That scamp of a brother of hers would sell her for a dancing girl without a pang to any sort of *pujaree* who'd fill his pockets for him.

"Good Heavens!" he muttered, bringing his fist down heavily upon his knee, "I'd rather see her lying dead at my feet than married to the Sword of Bhowani." Then, turning his eyes upon the man, "Go, Hurree," he said. "Go, and return quickly. Thy master hath a faithful servant in Hurree Das. Go, my friend, and remember the sixty rupees."

Tom Threapwell had lived long enough in India to know that native methods of obtaining information were inexplicable to Europeans, that greed of gain is an all-powerful motive in the native breast, and that between Hindoos and Mussulmans few things which a European really desires to know are absolutely unattainable provided that employer and employee have the confidence of each other.

Tom was not surprised, therefore, when Hurree presented himself, thirty-three hours later, and put in a claim to the money. Threapwell looked at the man curiously. Under the calm, impassive exterior of the Hindoo, Hurree was obviously in a state of intense excitement. The pupils of his eyes were dilated, his delicate nostrils twitched convulsively; you could see the muscles working like steel cords under his dusky skin.

What in the name of wonder could the man have discovered to affect him to such an extraordinary extent? In all his experience of the native character

* Drafts.

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Threapwell had never met the like before. He signed for Hurree to proceed, marvelling much what strange disclosure he was about to listen to.

"May thy splendour increase, excellency," said the man, making a low salaam. "Holy *Gopi*, but thy servant hath seen a strange thing, a thing which is not lawful for a man to behold."

Threapwell, thinking the man was probably referring to the ceremonies connected with the mystic marriage to the Sword, told him roughly that he needn't waste breath over that part of the business.

"Have you found Kummoo?" he cried. "Is she unharmed? Where have they got her hidden? I don't care a fig-leaf about all the rest. Come, speak, can't you? Is the girl safe? Let's have it at once, man, if you want to handle that sixty rupees."

Threapwell jumped up in his excitement, and began to walk about the room.

"The sahib shall be answered," stammered Hurree, whose face was working frightfully; "but I could wish that——"

"Out with it, man," roared Tommy, now quite beside himself. "Don't stand there gabbling about their vile pujaree business. Where is she?"

"His excellency shall be taken to the place this very night if he will trust himself with his servant," said Hurree, who was quaking with fear.

"You have seen her?" queried Threapwell, stopping in front of the man.

"I have seen her, excellency—her and another," he added in a whisper.

And Tommy, guessing who that other might probably be, felt that Hurree had ample reason for his display of agitation.

* * * * *

"Now thou art every whit as good a Brahmin, sahib, as Hurree Das. The symbol of Vishnoo upon thy forehead completes thy conversion. Thy things can be left here till we return."

"How far do you call it to the tamarind grove?"

"Two miles, sahib; but the ceremonies will not be over before midnight. It is the Festival of the New Moon, and the new *moorlee* will dance in the procession before Bhowani."

Threapwell ground his teeth.

"Then if all's ready let's be starting," he said curtly.

The man laid his finger on the hilt of a dagger which Threapwell concealed in his waistband.

"Excellency promised that no violence should be offered in the temple."

Tommy smiled grimly.

"Let be! Could I, think you, tear her from the grasp of a dozen priests with my single arm? Am I fool enough to try?" He didn't think it necessary to explain that, under circumstances easily conceivable, the weapon might find a home in the breast of a Sultan. "No, Hurree, we must contrive some way of opening communications—your pujarees have all an itching palm—and arrange to work the 'palankeen and blanket trick,' which, I believe, is the proper thing in these cases. The dagger is for myself in case of discovery."

They walked on for some time in silence. Threapwell was strangely excited. The temple they were bound for was situated in a secluded grove some distance off the track. There Hurree had assured Threapwell that he would see Kummoo in the garb of a moorlee, and—but it was punishable with death to whisper a word of it—likewise another, one who, of all persons in the dominions of the Sultan, ought not to be seen in the temple of a heathen goddess, Tippoo Sahib himself, the "Tiger of Mysore."

Threapwell walked on, thinking now of the man and now of the girl. Perhaps it was to-night that he was to receive her, the Bride of the Sword, from the hands of the pujaree.

"Never!"—he clenched his teeth—"if he and she and Tippoo also had to die for it."

Hurree, he knew, had managed in some way to let Kummoo know that her "letter" had been delivered; but the very name of Tippoo seemed to turn the man sick.

"Sahib," whispered Hurree in low tones, breaking in upon Tommy's reverie, "we have reached the grove. The temple is at the bottom. Your name, remember, is Kasee Lall."

Another minute and Threapwell stood within the porch. The image of the goddess was concealed for the moment by the clouds of incense that were rising from the altar. Presently, however, he could distinguish peering through the gloom two blood red points glowing like twin stars. They were the eyes of the idol—clusters of uncut rubies of enormous value. Then for a space the entire figure of the dread Bhowani was plainly visible, a black marble image with a hideous red mouth. Garlanded with flowers, hung round with lamps blazing with jewels, the idol was receiving the adoration of the worshippers.

Again the smoke went up as the officiating priest threw fresh incense on the altar, and the procession began to move round the temple.

Threapwell, breathlessly watching the

The keen eyes of the Hindoo had detected the flutter of garments.

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space in front of the idol, presently saw emerge from behind the low pedestal on which the figure was seated a form that could be no other than Kummoo's. Gliding with the graceful motion of a sylph into her appointed place she began to dance. The musical clash of her gold anklets, the tinkle of her bell-bangles, accompanied the step.

Threapwell had glanced round the building several times without seeing anyone who suggested Tippoo. But now, fascinated by the strange scene, he looked on while Kummoo was dancing like a man in a dream.

Not many minutes, however, could have passed ere he became aware that another watcher was observing her intently from a recess by the side of the altar, a man who, as the dance proceeded, was at no pains to conceal the strong personal interest he took in the dancer. The girl danced with all the *abandon* of the devotee, utterly unconscious of the admiration she excited or of the eyes which followed every movement of her lithe, supple limbs.

Threapwell set himself to scrutinise the man carefully. In a few moments he was satisfied. The "make-up" was perfect. Tippoo's colour and features, of course, lent themselves to the deception. To all appearance the man was a Brahmin of the Brahmins; but Threapwell, sure of his recognition and unable to restrain himself, hissed into the scandalised ear of Hurree Das the word which it had been death to utter in that place,

"Tippoo!"

The startled bearer never betrayed by look or sign what it cost him to suppress a groan.

Snatching the dagger from Threapwell's girdle, she plunged it into the breast of Tippoo.

"Yes, Mr. Motee Ram," said Tommy to himself, "I see now plain enough what was your idea in marrying Kummoo to the Sword. It's just the sort of infernal plot that would commend itself to your evil brain. So the chatter in the bazaar is truer after all than I conceived. Pah! how much now, I wonder, are you going to divide with that shaven-headed old villain with the red smudge on his forehead who's in charge of this devil's haunt? But you'll have to reckon with Tommy Threapwell before completing the bargain, my friend."

Throughout the rest of the night's ceremonies, Threapwell's brain was busy. He knew that not a moment was to be lost if he would save Kummoo from the common fate of the priestesses devoted to the service of the temple, and the fact that Tippoo himself was present in the guise of a Brahmin at the Hindoo festival of the new moon, augured badly both for the girl's prospects and the lover's chances. For well indeed the Captain knew that any man suspected of sharing the guilty secret would never be permitted to see the light of the morrow's morn.

The task of saving Kummoo from the hands of the pujarees would have been no easy one if Tippoo had not stepped in to complicate it. Now it appeared desperate; but, as Tommy watched the fairy form and lovely figure as it moved with easy grace through the voluptuous measure, he determined to accept the situation and trust to luck to bring him through.

The ceremonies concluded, Threapwell left the temple hurriedly. His immediate object was to keep Tippoo under observation. He wished to satisfy himself that the Sultan left the building alone. He determined, therefore, to secrete himself in the grove at a point which would command the entrance to the building.

The night was dark, but the temple was ablaze with lights. That attendants would be in waiting at a convenient spot Threapwell considered a mere matter of precaution.

Before he had gone a dozen paces off the track Hurree gripped him by the wrist. The keen eyes of the Hindoo had detected the flutter of garments.

"Palankeen men there, sahib!" he whispered in terrified tones; "six—eight. Palankeen back of the chumpa tree."

Then the foul work was to be done to-night, was it? That, of course, would explain Tippoo's presence at the temple. On the previous night he had gone there stealthily to gloat over the girl's beauty. Now, he had come like a thief to receive her, the Bride of Bhowani, from the hands of the priest. If the Captain would strike, he must strike at once. The crisis had taken him unawares, but he must not hesitate.

"It's either his life or mine!" he muttered as he loosened the dagger in his girdle. "Hist! What's that?" he inquired, suddenly assuming a listening attitude. "Hark!"

His ear had caught the slow trickle of water.

"The holy well, sahib, the well in which the pilgrims bathe at the Festival of the Holy Mother."

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A wild thought sped like a flash through Tommy's brain as he inquired:

"Where is it?"

"In the ravine below, sahib. These giant peepuls hide it from view; they overhang it. The path leading to it is at the back of the temple."

"It sounds just under my feet."

"The sahib is standing just above it," answered Hurree, puzzled to account for his master's manner. "The trees prevent him from seeing it."

"Is it a clean jump?"

"Protection of Heaven!" exclaimed the man. "Is the sahib mad? *Sho-rk!* See there!"

Threapwell looked in the direction indicated, and saw a figure which he recognised at once as that of Tippoo emerging from under the porch of the temple. In his arms he clasped a form which, half-smothered beneath a blanket, uttered no cry and made no struggle.

A Hindoo girl, married to the Sword, Kummoo had passively resigned herself to her fate, yet every faculty was alive and alert. Not till she found herself in the Sultan's zenana would she cease to believe that her English lover would find a means to carry her off under the very eyes of the "Tiger" himself.

"Now, Hurree," said Threapwell, "scatter. I should be sorry if harm came to you. You can go no further along this road. Get back to my quarters, and if I don't turn up in twenty-four hours take the letter you'll find on my desk to the Colonel. Now, look to yourself, man—run, run!" And slipping through the tamarind trees, Threapwell, with his hand on his dagger hilt, waited impatiently the coming of Tippoo.

He allowed the Sultan to pass, then, drawing his blade, slipped out on the path and raised his arm. But at this moment his English training asserted itself—the natural instincts of the Englishman would not permit him to use the coward's blow—and, replacing the dagger in his girdle, he seized Tippoo firmly by the shoulder and called him by his name.

The sudden action, the fearless utterance, the dread character of the tamarind grove, the superstitious nature of the man, and the guilty knowledge he possessed, caused Tippoo to stagger like a stricken deer. He dropped the burden he was carrying, and fumbled in his waistband for his dagger.

The next moment, with Kummoo in his arms, he had taken the leap.

Kummoo, who had thrown off the blanket, on hearing the voice of Threapwell, started to her feet. With the swiftness of feminine intuition, she grasped the situation in an instant. Snatching the dagger from Threapwell's girdle, she plunged it into the breast of Tippoo before he had time to recover from his amaze, and whispering, "The well, my lord, the well below the peepuls," she pushed her lover towards the trees.

"The very thing, my pigeon, I'd decided on," murmured Threapwell, pressing a kiss upon her lips.

The next moment, with Kummoo in his arms, he had taken the leap. It was a thirty foot jump, and there was no time to "negotiate" it. But at certain crises in men's lives the man who hesitates is lost.

"She was light as a feather," said Tommy in telling the tale, "and clung to me like a leech."

Tippoo Sultan, who never doubted that Bhowani had worked a miracle on behalf of her morlee, was confined to his palace by "indisposition" for a fortnight from the date of the new moon, but he carried a mark on his breast ever after.

The piece of plate which now adorns the mess-table of the 3rd Madras Fusiliers, was commissioned by Major Threapwell to commemorate the rescue of the girl who became his wife from the "claws" of the Tiger of Mysore, and, long after Tippoo's capital had fallen before General Harris, an English sahib, whose white villa was hidden amongst the tulip trees behind Madras, would tell the story of Kummoo, the Bride of the Sword.

H. Hunter.

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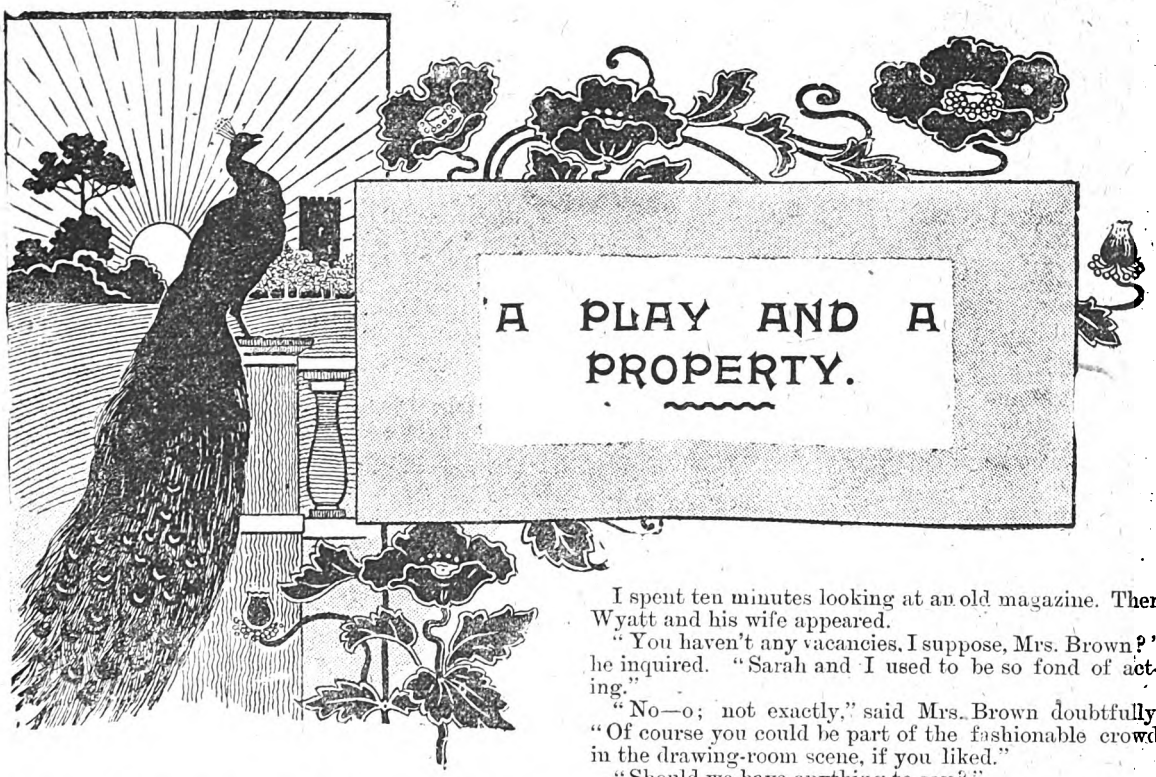

A PLAY AND A PROPERTY.

I HESITATED about going to the Browns' theatricals, when we received the invitation: but as soon as I heard that Mrs. Brown had written the play herself my hesitation vanished.

"We shall be engaged," I pronounced firmly.

My wife said afterwards that she understood me to mean "engaged" to go there. I do not believe she understood anything of the sort; but as she had a new dress she was bound to wear it somewhere. So I accepted the inevitable.

When we arrived the hall was full of hats and coats, and I could hear at least a dozen ladies talking in the breakfast room; but we were shown into an empty drawing-room—the theatre.

"You see," Mrs. Brown explained, "the difficulty is to get an audience."

"I should think so," I agreed. Then I caught my wife's warning eye. "At least, I mean—er——"

"Everybody wants to act, you see. So I have put in as many parts as possible, if they only have a few lines apiece." My wife looked at me appealingly.

"Very kind of you," I murmured. "If you have a few lines left for Mrs. Oliver——"

"I'm afraid," said Mrs. Brown uneasily. "You see, it's rather late. If you had told me before——"

"It doesn't matter," said my wife with an air of sad resignation, "though I have always longed to act"

"Then," said Mrs. Brown, "you shall. I will introduce another character. Let me see. 'You might bring in a letter—or——"

"That would do nicely. I could 'make up' as a servant, you know, with a nice cap."

"It would just suit you. Come into the green room, and we will arrange it."

So I was left alone in my glory.

I spent ten minutes looking at an old magazine. Then Wyatt and his wife appeared.

"You haven't any vacancies, I suppose, Mrs. Brown?" he inquired. "Sarah and I used to be so fond of acting."

"No—o; not exactly," said Mrs. Brown doubtfully. "Of course you could be part of the fashionable crowd in the drawing-room scene, if you liked."

"Should we have anything to say?"

"Well—er—you can make a few remarks, you know, about anything that occurred to you."

"The weather, Sarah," he suggested, in a stage whisper.

"The weather, John," she agreed. "I could 'make up' in some of Mrs. Brown's things, and powder my hair."

"And I could borrow some clothes from Brown. I suppose he wouldn't mind, would he?"

"He'll be delighted," Mrs. Brown averred, "if he hasn't lent them all to the others."

"If he has," said Wyatt cheerfully, "I'll borrow some of theirs."

So they also departed to the green room.

Tankerton was the next to arrive.

"You and Mr. Oliver will be nice company for one another till we are ready," said Mrs. Brown, persuasively; but he pleaded so hard for a part that she agreed to his being anything that did not interfere with the action of the play.

"I'll just run home and borrow my brother's volunteer uniform," he observed gleefully, "to make up in," and off he ran.

Then Kate Nugent came in.

Kate is a jolly girl, and I thought that she and I would make a capital audience. Unfortunately, she also desired to perform, and extracted Mrs. Brown's consent to go and borrow a cousin's friend's sister's uniform to "make up" as a hospital nurse.

After another ten minutes young Sharp and his sister were shown in. They were so hurt at having been left out of the performance that the authoress promptly added a part for each.

Sharp was to be a masher and have my silk hat, and my stick to suck; and his sister was to wear grand-

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mother Brown's cap and spectacles and take my ticket to the door. An old 'bus ticket, I was informed confidentially, would do.

Finally, old Morse appeared. To my horror he seemed quite content to stop with me.

"We can have a nice little chat," he said.

He is the biggest bore within five miles.

"You don't mean to tell me that you are not taking a part," I exclaimed. "If I had suspected that, I don't think I should have come." If I had suspected that, he would be left alone with me, I am sure I shouldn't! "Why, with your powers of elocution!"

"It is rather a pity," he assented thoughtfully. "Perhaps, if you were to suggest it?"

Our hostess came smilingly to greet him, and I suggested it accordingly.

The poor woman looked at me reproachfully. I really felt sorry for her; but self-preservation is the first law of nature. So I persisted that it would be a thousand pities if some use were not made of his talents.

"If you had only heard him tell that tale about his little dog!" I said. "I shall never forget it!"

"I don't see how I can bring in the little dog," she objected. "There isn't a speaking part left; but there's the moon—in the first scene, you know."

"The moon?"

"It's a Chinese lantern, really."

"I can't be a Chinese lantern," he protested in a hurt voice.

"No," she admitted, "but it has to rise, of course. You could pull the string over the door!" He looked dissatisfied. Some people are never contented.

"Won't there be anything after the first scene?"

"There wasn't," she confessed. "But there are several other scenes in which the moon could rise again."

So the moon artist was led to the green room; and I was once more alone in the stalls.

The curtain was a long time rising; to be exact, there was no curtain that I could see to rise. At last I ventured to knock at the dining room door and remonstrate.

"All right, old chap," said Brown. "They're just whitewashing my hair and moustache. I'm an old general, you know."

"Mind you don't grow too old, before it begins," I growled.

"We shan't be half a minute," he answered, "before we come and set up the scenery."

After another quarter of an hour Brown and three other fellows appeared. Brown's hair was whitewashed so effectively that it stood straight on end, and his moustache looked like a plaster model. He wore home-made military trousers, several sizes too large, and his coat was a reconstruction out of some of his wife's old blouses. His cocked hat had been a table-cover, except the cockade of coloured tape. Altogether he looked like one of the stuffed effigies that little boys burn upon the 5th of November! His companions were similarly attired.

"Perhaps I ought to go out while you set up the scenery?" I suggested. I was afraid that I could not contain my emotions if I looked at the actors for long.

"Thanks, old man," said Brown cordially, "I didn't like to suggest it, but if you really don't mind——"

"Not at all. Where shall I go?"

"Well, there's only the kitchen left. All the other rooms are taken up for dressing. You see, there are about twenty-five characters in it."

"Don't mention it," I said cheerfully.

They have a very pretty parlourmaid at Brown's. She was engaged in tying greenstuff on a huge clothes horse in the kitchen.

"Why, Florrie!" I said, "whatever is this?"

"This, Mr Oliver," she said with a titter, "is the shrubbery!"

I sat down on the table and roared. If you had seen the shrubbery!

"The heroine stands in it," she explained, "like this. Then the gentleman comes in—there's just room for two—and catches hold of her, and—Oh, Mr. Oliver!"

"Aren't you in the play, Florrie?" She tossed her head.

"Not me! All my best aprons and caps are. There's four or five of them going to be servants in turns. I wish they'd come and take a turn out here!"

"Have you any more scenery?" I enquired.

"Not unless you call them scenery." She looked up with a piece of string between her teeth, and nodded at a bottle, water jug and glasses upon a tray.

"Is there a drinking scene?"

"There's a crusty old lord," she stated, "in the second scene. His wife gives him some whisky, and he complains that it's poisoned, or bad or something."

"Is it bad?"

"Bad! Why the lord is uncle Tomkins, what she has expectations from!"

"Umph," I said thoughtfully. "It would make the acting better if—" Florrie looked at me mischievously.

"There's a bottle of quinine wine in the cupboard, in a bottle just like that," she remarked casually. "Plenty of quinine and not much wine. She made it. It's nearly the same colour."

"Ah!" said I.

Florrie picked up the shrubbery and departed, with a saucy, backward glance. In five seconds I had found the quinine wine, and in another five I had changed the bottles. It might help on the action, I considered.

Then I was summoned to the "royal box"—otherwise the bay window. The curtains were pinned across the front, leaving me in semi-darkness, until a bell had rung five or six times. Then they were drawn up—I mean unpinned.

The drama opened with the shrubbery scene. Maggie Bell came tripping in the door and disappeared inside the shrubbery. The clothes horse was very tall, and Maggie is very short.

"I say," I objected, "I can't see anything but the ornament on the top of her hair." So they gave her a footstool to stand on.

Then the hero came in, looking very nervous.

"Ah!" said he severely.

Then he stopped.

"How this scene reminds me," prompted Mrs. Brown, from behind a big screen.

"Screen—scene—er—reminds me," he repeated, feebly.

"Of her—*Go on!*"

"Of her—her—whose—er—lovely blue eyes were once the sun of my night."

"Star of my night," corrected the talented authoress. "Do collect yourself, Fred!"

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So Fred collected himself, and gave out a large amount of eloquence in a very shamefaced manner. Presently he fixed his eyes upon the door.

"Ah! What do I see? The orb whose pale refulgence——"

"Wait, wait!" cried Mrs. Brown. "They haven't lit the candle."

So he waited, while Morse came in and illuminated the moon. Then he went out and began to pull it up by the string over the door.

The moon rose as if it had "made up" as a shooting star. Near the zenith it tilted and became a blazing comet.

There was a wild scream, and a horde of generals and admirals rushed in and eclipsed it with a hearthrug and door mat.

When the excitement had subsided, I was asked to imagine the moon. I consented, and the hero made his way behind the clothes-horse.

"Ah, false girl!" he exclaimed with surprise.

"Oh, Fred—I mean Claude!" said the heroine with a giggle.

"At last do I see thy face."

"Why dost thou. Fred, you're standing on my foot. Why dost thou call me false, when—Fred! You're on the other."

"All right!"

"It isn't all right. You are a great bear."

"Go on," said Mrs. Brown impatiently.

"Why dost thou—do be quiet!—call me false, when—Don't be so absurd!" There was a shuffle, Maggie's head disappeared suddenly; and the shrubbery overturned.

Mrs. Brown rushed forth, read the riot act, and put the shrubbery out in the passage.

"You shall act without any scenery," she said sternly. "Mr. Oliver, you will imagine the shrubbery, please."

"Certainly," I assented.

They acted accordingly. At least I suppose it was acting. The stage kisses sounded very real. So did the box on the ears which Maggie—I mean Estelle de Vere—gave him. But that I believe was not in the play.

Then I was pinned up again. The waiting however was not so long this time. Indeed it seemed singularly short. This may have been because Kate Nugent, by some accident, was pinned up with me.

In the second scene, Aunt Susan—I mean Lady de Montmorency-Talbot—was discovered, seated at a writing table. Three servants brought in letters. There was evidently a postal delivery every thirty seconds at the castle. They each offered a few remarks, and were ordered out.

Then one of them announced Lord de Montmorency-Talbot. As it was his own castle, I don't quite know why they announced him; but possibly he liked it made quite clear that he was a lord.

He was a very old and crusty gentleman; and Uncle Tompkins seemed to feel quite at home in the part. He has a very red face, a very short temper, and a voice like bottled thunder, at his best; and someone had stamped on his pet corn just before he came in. He proposed to disinherit Claude, and a few trifles of that sort. He stormed at his wife and stamped round the stage. He dismissed every servant who appeared. Incidentally he knocked over a what-not full of china, and remarked that it should not have been put in such an absurd place; but I scarcely think that was in the "book." Once he actually said a bad word. Her ladyship evidently thought it necessary to soothe him, so she rang for a servant, and commanded some whisky to be brought.

"What is this abomination, woman?" his lordship demanded fiercely.

"Whisky, my love," said her ladyship soothingly. "Do take a little. It will do you good." Then she informed me in an aside that she "must dissemble, and hide her breaking heart."

"Ur-r-r!" growled the wicked lord. "Do me good—ur-r-r. You'd rather it poisoned me." He helped himself to half a glassful, with a dash of water. Uncle Tompkins always likes to taste what he is drinking, he says. He proceeded to taste.

From this point his acting was simply grand. He dropped the glass with a crash, bounded from his chair and gave a wild yell.

"Ur-r-r-roo!" he shouted. "Confound you! Ur-r-r! What the—! Ur-r-r!" He danced round the room like a wild animal.

"Splendid!" said Mrs. Brown enthusiastically.

"Magnificent!" cried Brown, looking through the door.

"Superb!" shouted a dozen voices from the passage.

"Encore!" I yelled, clapping my hands.

He shook his fist at us all round in turn.

"If you think you'll make a fool of me, madam," he thundered, "I'll teach you better. I'll go home and alter my will this moment, as sure as my name is Tomkins!"

"De Montmorency-Talbot," corrected Mrs. Brown softly. "How grand he is!"

"De Montmorency-Talbot be ——," he shrieked.

He rushed from the door like a whirlwind. From the noise outside I gathered that he had upset the hall stand, getting his overcoat and hat. There was a slam of the front door. I heard him growling like a lion as he stamped down the front path. Then Brown rushed in with his whitewashed hair appropriately standing on end.

"Clara!" he gasped. "The whisky—He's gone!"

* * * * *

"So annoying," said my wife, as we walked home, "to stop the play like that. Why, I had only been on once."

"How did it happen?" I inquired. "Who was to blame?"

"Mrs. Brown herself," said my wife, "of course. She took the wrong bottle out of the cupboard. He'll cut her out of his will to a certainty."

"Yes," I said; "but he'll put her in again."

He did; upon condition that she burnt the play.

OWEN OLIVER.

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BY ONE OF HER MAJESTY'S SERVANTS.

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Helen of San Antonio.

"THERE'S going to be trouble over this," said Jule Lamar, swinging himself into his high-peaked embossed saddle and thoughtfully stroking the coil of *riata* that hung from the horn.

I was riding with him.

"About what?" I asked.

He turned on me rather savagely and touched his mustang with the great spurs, checking its forward plunge with the cruel mameluke bit.

"I'll tell you, being a friend," he said. "Maybe you've heard me speak of Lola Villarez, maybe not."

A flush overspread his sunburnt face, shaded by the broad hat-brim from the glare of the Texan sun that shone down fiercely on San Antonio, cracking the paint on every shanty and posada outside which sundry "gentlemen" lonfed, basking like alligators in the frantic heat, chewing or smoking.

Now and then a "prairie schooner" with its huge white tilt and sleepy oxen stirred up the abundant dust, or a dashing vaquero in all the glory of fringe and chains and costly gold-trimmed sombrero cantered along on his fiery little steed. On the shaded side-walks a motley but scant collection of humanity strolled and jostled; hunters, trappers, rangers, Chinamen, negroes, señoritas, cow-punchers from the plains and vaqueros from the Rio Grande, New Mexico and Chihuahua. There were sailors and soldiers, rich and poor, murderers and curés; and Jule Lamar and myself.

I had heard of the lady in question, and from others besides my friend Jule.

Her mother, a Mexican of Taos, kept the Posada Americana, her father was dead—and that, as far as I know, was all that anyone knew of him.

Lola herself was certainly a beauty, the acknowledged belle of San Antonio, tall, dark and brilliant, and Jule had fallen head over heels in love with her "on sight."

He had believed that she returned his affection, and perhaps the idea of one day becoming the "boss" of the fine saloon had something to do with his infatuation, for never had gladiator greater desire to end his days as a wine-shop keeper in Rome than this Texan cow-puncher to be the emperor of his own saloon.

Lately however, Garcia Torré had seen fit to take upon himself the office of cavalier to the lady and to make an attack upon the virgin heart of this Mexican enchantress; "which," said Jule sadly, "is going to turn the place upside down."

I reminded him that a girl was perfectly free to select her knight, but the tall ranchman shook his head.

"She promised me," he said, firmly; "and by all her unmentionable greaser saints she must stick to her word. This half-breed Injun fellow will have to vamose, or there'll be a fuss. You hear me?"

I furtively surveyed the man and thought that he would be no mean antagonist for the stranger who had crossed his path, notwithstanding the fact that the man Torré was a notoriously "bad" specimen—an Indian-fighter known to be a murderer, and no place but San Antonio could hold him.

It seemed strange that Lola could have fancied the companionship of a man who was known to have strangled a squaw and two babies with his naked hands, not to, mention numerous other more or less true reports of horrible deeds.

Of course such things as "getting the dead-wood" on "Colt" Hankey over a dispute of a bet at Poker, and dismissing that worthy from earth in a hurry, and knifing a "Chinee" for smiling at him when inebriated, were not counted, but apart from that the "hard cases" even looked askance on him.

Jule resented bitterly the fact of the girl he was really earnestly in love with being seen in the company of such a noted dirty desperado, and avowed to me his intention of clearing up affairs.

Next day we rode together to the Posada Americana Jule wishing the moral support of a friend, and I to see "fair play," in the interest of one who was a true companion, for Torré had on one occasion strangled an unconscious enemy in a duel with his own neck-cloth, and, hitching our animals, strode into the bar.

"I want to speak to you, Lola," said Jule, quietly with a set smile on his grim face; "come out on to the verandah."

With our respective potations we repaired thither. In a moment Lola joined us, and I had leisure to inspect this perturber of the souls of men.

It was no exaggeration to say she was a beauty, and as far as mere personal loveliness went I admired her, with the intense admiration I should extend to a splendid statue or painting.

But love, no! Her skin was fair, and tinted like a rose-leaf, and indigo tresses clustered over her head in luxurious heaps, contrasting vividly with the whiteness of her brow.

But to me, an admirer of her sex, there was something dangerous in the full, pouting lips and the languid eyes, the beauty seen in eastern odalisks.

I could, however, understand Jule's passion for her, and knew that no arguments could point out to him the serpent in the angel's guise.

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I discreetly arose and retired a little, but I overheard the first words, spoken by the ranchman.

"Lola," he said, with a quiver in his voice, "you know I love you, don't you, and you have promised——"

I got out of earshot, but from a distance I saw them talking very earnestly, Jule pleadingly, the girl haughtily. Smoking my cigar I pondered on the future, my reverie being broken by the entrance, with a bottle of whisky, of no less a personage than Garcia Torré.

With belled spurs tinkling on his high-heeled boots he advanced, and on perceiving the pair *tête-à-tête* stopped suddenly with a villainous Spanish oath. His right hand, habitually free for action, dropped on his revolver-butt, and Jule, thrusting Lola aside, confronted him with similar menace.

"A palaver Torré," he said, "drop your gun!"

The ruffian gingerly moved his hand and agreed to a talk, and I strolled up with all the supply of moral support I possessed, backed by a "forty-five" revolver, and a large bowie.

"Who's your pard?" asked Torré, suspiciously.

"Oh, he's only a Britisher," said Jule, as though such a being were scarcely worth reckoning here or there; but under the circumstances I controlled myself from making reply and endeavoured to look as dangerous as I could. Jules face was set and stern.

"It's this way," he said, "I figured to have got the inside track on the girl's notions, but she seems to have two minds on the point. Now, there's only one thing to be done, the town won't hold the three of us. Either you vamose or we fight for it. Which!"

Lola began to sob in terror.

The ruffian turned on her with an expression that brought Jule's revolver from its sheath in an instant.

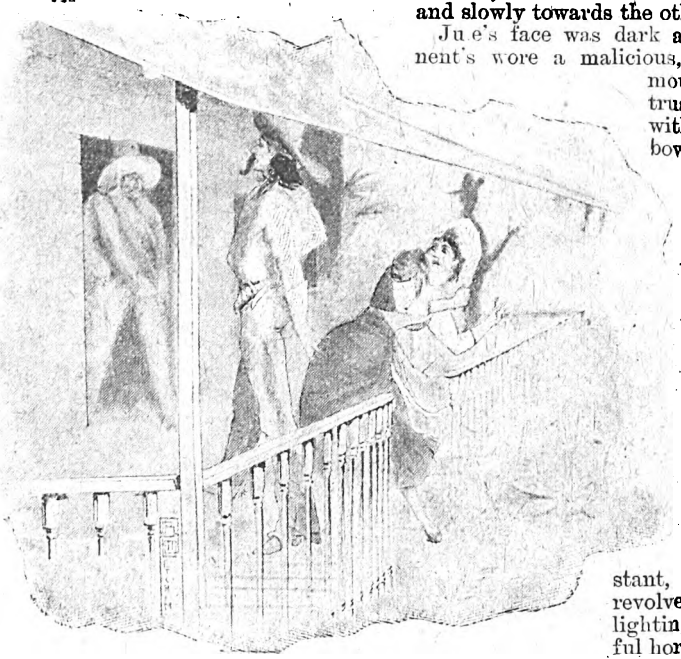
"If you speak to her again, you die in your tracks!" he thundered. "Answer my question! Which?"

"I'll fight," said Garcia, sullenly, brief under the threat of the revolver.

"Good. Let it be with rope, gun, and knife, by the Alamo monastery to-morrow at sun-up. Till after then we will both leave the girl alone."

They went out, leaving Lola weeping in the shady hut but when she saw that they had gone, she dried her tears and resumed her ordinary composure, and before I followed them a slight, scornful smile curled her lip.

Garcia had gone, and Jule and I rode off in silence without a backward glance.



Jule, thrusting Lola aside, confronted him.

I thought of the morrow's meeting with gloom in my heart, knowing the issue of these wild duels but too well.

Garcia would bring four "pards," myself and three others from the ranch would support Jule, and the probabilities were that there would be a free fight.

The fateful hour arrived and I hope I may never see again such a quartette of unhung ruffians as appeared that morning with their principal.

"Vulture's meat, every mother's son of a gun," laughed Pinto Jim, recklessly, and we all agreed with him. But for the inviolable honour of the *duello* I am sure we should have been more than justified in "plugging" the lot and the world would have been the better for their loss.

The two principals advanced and with a certain rough courtesy each raised his large sombrero, solemnly and slowly towards the other.

Jule's face was dark and stern, but his opponent's wore a malicious, evil grin; both were mounted on tried and trusted steeds and armed with *riata*, revolver and bowie, and the issue appeared to hang on an accident so evenly matched did they appear.

Turning their backs on one another they rode apart for twenty yards or so, and at the sharp sound of a pistol-shot turned and faced. At a slow canter each circled, winding the deadly *riata*, the two supple figures ready to dodge in an instant, the flashing spurs, the revolver-butt, chains and bits lighting up the picture of graceful horsemanship. And all for that girl who was perhaps even now flying with some third cavalier.

Almost like a sleight-of-hand trick Garcia swung down his rope to his left hand, and from his right leaped the flashing spurt of smoke from his revolver. I saw Jule's sombrero move and the brim buckle up, but almost before that had happened his noose shot out like arrowy lightning over his opponents head.

The man dropped, and it was all so quick that it seemed but one movement, yet the *riata* spun his hat from his head and nearly ripped off an ear as the closed noose leaped back harmlessly into the air.

Instantly a revolver bullet struck the horn of his saddle, sending the splinters flying, and one seemed to have struck him in the face, for the blood rushed down from a gash below the eye.

Half-stunned, he rose up, and now the mustangs flew in wide circles; Jule's rope was coiled and ready again and both long loops were winding against the blue sky in deadly rings.

The ranchman suddenly swooped down like a hawk on his opponent, but he was too impetuous and swept

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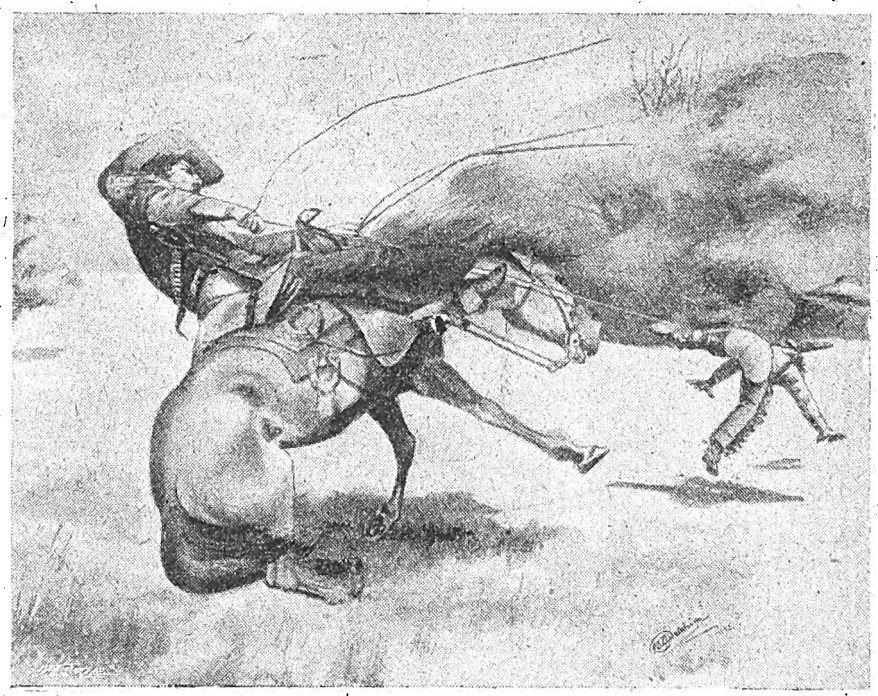
past the wheeling charger of Garcia, who dropped his rope right over him, as he bent over the horse's flank.

His own loop leaped into the air and encircled his man and both formidable bowies flashed forth together as he swung himself upright, and wheeling his fine steed on its hind legs, leapt it at his opponent.

The only way for Garcia to meet this violent attack was with his own steed, and as he pulled forth his long-barrelled revolver he wrenched the charger up to meet the battering hoofs of the other.

Flash! Flash! Crack, crack, crack! A medley of horses, men, flying ends and loops and tossing hair. Jule's brave steed thrust down the other, having the first advantage, but a bullet had ploughed its flesh from shoulder-point to saddle, and blood was flying in thick gouts. It dropped, too, from the rider's armed heel; but what was that to the triumph of the thrilling moment when the huge spurs sent the animal over the crouching steed before him, and horse and man rolled headlong on the plain!



He was hurled with frightful violence to the earth.

The man rose with a bound, raised his revolver, and as the hammer fell harmlessly, hurled it at Jule. It caught the ranchman fair on the forehead and he staggered with a cry as Garcia turned and leaped towards a clump of timber not far off.

For a moment I thought to see my friend drop, and felt thankful that his opponent had not followed up the attack with the bowie, for he could easily have wrenched Jule from the saddle and have made an end of him. But the half-stunned man recovered himself and headed his steed for the fugitive, mechanically recovering his *riata* and coiling it.

With the movement, a sudden fury seemed to animate him, for he sat straight up and twirled the wide noose for a deadly cast.

Garcia was within reach of the timber when beneath him fell the whirling circle. His feet were entangled, the noose closed over one, and as the mustang halted with a jerk the secured rope tightened and he was hurled with frightful violence to the earth as Jule staggered and fell from the saddle.

The mustang, perfectly trained and intelligent, wheeled and kept the rope stretched, and slowly we all moved towards the group.

"D'ye reckon your man's satisfied?" said Buck Lawson of "ours" to the roughs.

One of them rudely hauled the recumbent figure up, and as he did so a stream of blood rushed from his lips. His eyes were upturned and glassy and the man let him fall heavily to the ground with a dreadful laugh.

"Guess so. 'Morning, gentlemen."

The beautiful quartette moved off and we raised our comrade. He had a bullet wound and a knife-slash in the thigh and as we pulled off his hat a quantity of blood fell like a torrent from a wound where the first bullet, turned by the stiff brim, had ploughed a furrow in his scalp.

The revolver hurled at him had gashed his forehead and caused a deep bruise, but all his hurts were slight, comparatively.

Garcia was dead. Besides the wound in his face he had received a shot in the chest just above the heart and could scarcely have lived anyhow. But of course the violence with which he had been hurled to the earth settled any doubts on that score.

Jule's first words were respecting the cause of the trouble—Lola Villarez. He was soon able to move about, and insisted, despite his wounded thigh, on going to the Posada Americana.

The boys warned him that he would cause no end of complications by his rashness, but he relieved them of all anxieties on that score by a revolver bullet through the head administered by himself beside the dishevelled bed where the girl lay dead with Garcia Torré's bowie through her heart.

D. B. METCHIM.

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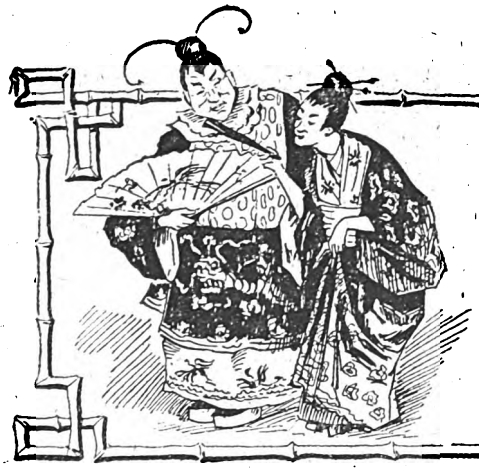

Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

IX.—HE TRIES TO SOLVE THE SERVANT GIRL PROBLEM.

"AND now what's happened?" demanded Mr. Bowser as he came home the other evening and found Mrs. Bowser setting the table for dinner.

"Nothing, except that the cook got cranky and left me at noon," she replied.

"You—you mean you sent her off without a moment's warning," he continued.

"I mean nothing of the kind. She found fault with the range, the kitchen, the washing and everything else, and finally said she'd go."

Mr. Bowser sulked and growled while eating the dinner, though it was a better one than usual, and it was not until Mrs. Bowser had cleared the table and was ready to sit down for the evening that he touched upon the subject again by saying:

"I want to talk to you a little, and I hope you will be able to keep your temper while I do so. You have had fifty different cooks in the last year, and the fact that none of them have remained with you over ten days shows that there is something radically wrong somewhere."

"I have had only five cooks during the last year," corrected Mrs. Bowser. "There's the book with their names written down."

"I said fifty, and I know I'm right!" said Mr. Bowser with emphasis. "Fifty different cooks, and your treatment of them was so outrageous that not one of them could put up with it."

"Only five, and one got ill, one had to go home on account of death in the family, and two of the others refused to stay on your account."

"Refused to stay on my account. Woman, explain yourself!"

"They said you were too fussy and cranky!"

"Never!" shouted Mr. Bowser as his face grew red in a minute. "No girl ever said those words. In order to make excuses for your heinous conduct, you are resorting to a prevarication. We never had a cook who didn't look upon me as a sort of father to her. It has been your fault that they have left. You have met them with an icy glare; you have ground them under the iron heel; you have used them as if they had no souls nor feelings. I've watched you, and I've often wondered why some of the poor creatures didn't turn on you with the carving knife."

"That's all nonsense," quietly replied Mrs. Bowser.

"Nonsense, is it! Is it nonsense to put your heel on the neck of a girl obliged to work for her living? Is it nonsense for you to go round with your nose in the air and never think of her soul? Is it nonsense for you to nag, and threaten, and worry until a girl doing her best is driven to pack up her things and leave?"

"Perhaps you can do better?"

"I know I can."

"Then why don't you experiment?"

"I will. Yes, woman, I will show you that, by proper treatment and due respect for her feelings, a girl can be kept in this house for years, instead of days. Why, you don't understand human nature, to begin with. If I were a working girl, and you talked to me as I've heard you talk to some of the applicants, I'd drown myself before I'd come to you!"

"There's an advertisement for the morning paper," said Mrs. Bowser, "and if you'll stay home for a couple of hours and select a cook, I shall be greatly obliged to you."

"I'll do it, and if I don't find one who'll want to stay with us as long as she lives you can set it down that your conduct has given our house a bad name. I know that other families keep girls for years and years, and I'm sure we could if you treated them like human beings."

Mr. Bowser had a good deal more to say before bedtime, but Mrs. Bowser let him go on and waited for her revenge. Breakfast had scarcely been cleared away next morning before a girl arrived in answer to the advertisement. It was left to Mr. Bowser to welcome her, and he met her with a smile and began:

"I am glad to see you. The promptness with which you have answered the advertisement speaks well for you. What wages do you want per month?"

"How does it come that you are choosing the servant?" asked the girl.

"Because I think I understand them better than my wife does."

"Oh! I see. Then you are to boss the kitchen?"

"In a general way, yes."

"Then I don't want the place! I wouldn't work where I had to take orders from a man!"

She was gone before Mr. Bowser could get out another word, but while he was wondering what was the matter with her a second applicant arrived.

"Is the missus ill and abed?" she queried as she got inside the door

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"Not at all," replied Mr. Bowser. "My wife has had so much trouble with servants that I thought I would do the engaging this time."

"But what do you know about the kitchen and cooking?"

"A good deal, my dear girl—a good deal. You see——"

"I see that it's a house where there would be trouble in no time, and I won't take the place!" said the girl as she backed out.

Mr. Bowser felt a chill pass over him, but he braced himself up and tried to look bland as No. 3 rang the bell. The girl looked at him with doubt and suspicion, but waited to hear what he had to say.

"You see," he began, "my wife and I differ somewhat on this servant problem. It never seems to occur to her that the girl in the kitchen has a soul."

"But what's a cook's soul to do with the work?" asked the applicant.

"You—you don't exactly understand me. You have a soul, of course. You also have feelings. It must be hard enough for you to have to toil from day to day for one pound per month, but when on top of that the woman of the house is constantly grinding you into the dust, your outraged feelings must—must——"

"I don't want the place!" said the girl, as she started for the door.

"But, my dear girl——"

"I have never worked in a lunatic asylum, and I never shall!" she added as she went out.

There was something wrong with Mr. Bowser's system. He realised it, but he was determined to see it through. No. 4 appeared almost as soon as No. 3 had departed, and after a bland welcome, he said:

"Have you ever worked in a family where the woman treated you as if you had no soul?"

"No, sir," she promptly replied.

"If you could find a place where the family would look upon you as a human being—where your feelings would be respected—where there would be no yawning gulf between employer and employée—if you——"

"Who runs the kitchen here?" interrupted the girl as she rose up.

"Well, my wife has been running it, you know, but she has had so much trouble with her girls that I have decided to take it over."

"Then I wouldn't care for the place! When a man has to turn boss of his own kitchen, he'd better do the cooking as well!"

The advertisement brought nine girls in all. In each instance Mr. Bowser set out to tell them that it was a place in which it would be recognised that they had souls and feelings, but in each instance, also, he was choked off and the applicant left. Two of the girls threw out hints that he had wheels in his head, a third took him for a lecturer, and a fourth said she was sorry for his wife. When the ninth and last had disappeared, Mr. Bowser put on his hat and started for his office without a word to Mrs. Bowser. When he came home to dinner, and found a girl from the registry office in the kitchen, he had no remarks to make. Mrs. Bowser tried to lead him round to it, but he only glared at her across the table, and helped himself to some more chicken.

M. Quad.

Next Week: He Makes a Discovery Which Hurts His Feelings.

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As stated in the conditions, the Editor reserves the right to close the Competition at one day's notice. As it is obviously impossible for us to tell when the British Flag will be hoisted in Pretoria, and as we desire to give readers as long a time as possible to send their attempts, we cannot name here the exact date of closing. This date will, therefore, be announced in the columns of the "DAILY EXPRESS," and all Coupons sent in after that date—no matter if they appear in a copy of "SHORT STORIES" which you did not get until after that date—will be disqualified. Therefore, send in your Coupons at once. For all we know, the closing day may be to-morrow.

STOP!
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Home Notes

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A Snapshot—And After.

JACK ST. AUBYN, attired in a faultless and spotless yachting suit, ran up the steps of one of the best hotels in Cowes and approached a charming-looking girl and her father, who were seated on the verandah watching the people.

"Good morning, Miss Westwood," exclaimed the young man, airily, by way of greeting. "Have you any plans for this morning?"

"Yes, sir!" snapped the old gentleman, before his daughter could reply. "My daughter has made plans for the morning. She intends to spend it in a boat, with no other company than her own."

A quick crimson mounted to the young man's face, but turning to the speaker, he composedly replied:

"Your daughter surely could find no more delightful company. Pardon my intrusion."

And with a graceful bow and a half-amused, half-questioning glance at the young lady, he strolled away.

Winnie watched him go down the smooth walk, with easy, swinging strides, until he was out of sight, and then turned to her father.

"Daddy, why are you always so brusque and disagreeable to Mr. St. Aubyn, when you are kindness itself to everyone else?"

"Because he is an ass," growled Mr. Westwood, with a scowl of displeasure.

"I'm sure he is nothing of the sort," argued his daughter, flushing and drawing herself up rather stiffly. "He is courteous, well-bred, handsome, and has a splendid position for a man of his age; and all through his own exertions, too."

"That's just it," replied her father, testily. "That's what makes me so blamed mad—the prig is so confoundedly proud and independent. Did it all himself, and has nobody to thank. Bah! he makes me sick, he does. All those high and mighty airs, just because he has struck a little luck, when there's many a poor devil, worth his weight in gold, who is grubbing along at starvation wages."

"Well, under the circumstances, I think he has a right to be proud; and if he is, you cannot say he is either vain or haughty."

"Oh! you know all about it, do you? Well, I'm off; I'll suffocate if I stay on this verandah another minute. There's not a breath of air. What are you going to do with yourself this morning, dear?"

"You have made my programme for me, and I shall abide by it," said Winnie, meekly. "I'm going to have the boat and take things easy all the morning."

"All right. Hurry along then, and I'll see you safely start."

Half an hour later Mr. Westwood's eyes glowed with fatherly pride as he watched the light boat shoot out over the placid waters of Spithead, skilfully propelled by the steady trained stroke of his daughter's oars; and after waving his handkerchief to her, addressed himself to the enjoyment of his latest and most enthusiastic hobby—snap-shot photography. It was comforting to this old plutocrat to think that Winnie was alone on the water, where that young scrub, St. Aubyn, could not get at her.

"Why doesn't he keep away from Winnie? Goodness knows, I've given him hints enough and pretty broad ones, too, but men of his stamp never will take a hint. And you can't make him mad. Why, if I had been in his place I'd have thrashed myself long ago. He's always got some sugar-coated speech ready that makes a man feel a fool."

On the following night Mr. Westwood was in his element. He had arranged a little entertainment in the hotel drawing-room for the benefit of the family of a poor man who had been drowned in the surf.

All the talent in the hotel was pressed into service. The programme was to include vocal and instrumental music, recitations, legerdemain and what not?

Mr. Westwood was the moving spirit of the whole affair and his portly form was seen everywhere—now among the audience applauding vigorously, now at the temporized box office near the door of the drawing-room—a moment later in the impromptu green-room, overhauling the properties.

He not only ran the curtain up and down, but operated it himself and acted as prompter from the wings, in a hoarse whisper, audible throughout the capacious room.

Indeed, he exerted himself so unceasingly that before the evening was half gone he was puffing like a fish out of water, while a tiara of perspiration beads stood on his rubicund brow.

The last number on the programme promised to be the most interesting and amusing; for Mr. Westwood was to show a series of lantern slides, with the aid of an electrical stereopticon, of instantaneous photographs which he had taken. He called them "unique postures" and all were to be local hits.

The first view showed a well-known villager, standing on the seawall, apparently in deep dejection, while his colossal wife was ostensibly chastising him with an umbrella. In the distance, two young girls were laughingly gazing on the spectacle.

The second picture was that of the interior of a typical boatman's cottage, evidently taken through a window, and revealed the boatman in the act of petting his dog. The third represented a party of bathers disporting themselves in the sea.

"Here is one," said Mr. Westwood, as he adjusted the next view, "of a couple of turtle doves I caught spooning in a boat on the sea yesterday. The distance from shore was so great that the figures came out very small on the plates, but the magnifying lens may help matters."

The picture was focussed on the screen, and presently a storm of applause burst from the audience. With a gasp of horror and dismay, Mr. Westwood turned off the electric current and fled from the scene.

* * * * *

"You see," said Jack St. Aubyn to a friend the next day, "the old fellow took that way of announcing my engagement to his daughter, Winnie. Rather an odd idea wasn't it?"

A. M. E.

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By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

INTRODUCTION.

For years past Britain and the Transvaal have been spoiling for a fight, and it was left to that well-known author, Mr. George Griffith, to write this strong and exciting serial nearly four years ago graphically describing a huge war between the two countries.

The story, coming so soon after the Jameson Raid, was read with unusual interest.

Now that Briton and Boer are in deadly conflict it will be interesting to read the story, and see how far the imagination of the author has actually come true.

CHAPTER XLII.

The Eve of Amajuba.

On Thursday, the 26th of February, 1897, the sun set behind the northern spur of the Drakensberg Mountains in the midst of a wild chaos of stormed-tossed clouds of all shades of colour from a thunderous blue-purple to a deep and angry blood-red. The day had been one of fitful showers, brief bursts of sunshine, and fierce, but swiftly-passing storms of rain and hail and lightning.

It seemed, indeed, as though Nature had set herself to work to arrange a fitting *mise en scène* for the tragedy which the sun was destined to look upon when he rose again—a tragedy upon which the curtain of Destiny would not fall until the fate of a continent, and perchance of an empire, stretching through many continents, had been decided—for this was the eve, not only of a crisis for the white races of South Africa, but also of another and greater crisis amidst which was to be decided the far wider question as to whether the Empire which had so completely eclipsed the glories of Ancient Rome had reached, as Rome had done in the August an Age, the apex of power where the upward road becomes the downward, or whether the arm that had so often hewn its way to victory was still strong to strike in defence of its ancient rights and the material things which the valour that nerved it had won.

As the history of all empires has shown, the day upon which any integral portion of a dominion is torn by hostile force from the imperial body, is for that dominion the day of Fate and the beginning of its ruin.

To-morrow was to be such a day for the Empire of Britain. Within the next few hours Africa was to be held or lost. If held, well and good, for then for the thousandth time the Anglo-Saxon would have proved that he was strong to keep, as well as bold to take. If lost, then South Africa would be but the first of the limbs of the once mighty organism that would be torn away by the enemies who would see in its loss the first unquestionable sign of the paralysis of the Colossus whose once-mighty arm encircled the world.

As Prince Paul Regna and his daughter were saying to each other that same evening in Pretoria, if Britain lost South Africa to-morrow, she would lose India the day after, Australia and Canada only a little later on, and so one by one the jewels would be torn from her imperial crown, and the broad lands that she had won would be snatched away peacemeal, until at last, thrust down to the level of a third-rate Power, she would realise the ideal of the Little Englander, wipe out four hundred years of her history, and exchange the policy of a world-wide Empire for the parochial administration of two or three little islands.

Nothing less than this depended upon the issue of the conflict that was to be waged between the two forces which confronted each other that evening on the slopes of Amajuba Hill and its attendant heights, and on the wide veldt which stretched away northward beyond the Vaal River.

There could hardly have been a greater contrast than that which existed between the first and second battles of Amajuba. The first had been a climax of a series of skirmishes between forces almost absurdly small in comparison with the magnitude of the interests for which they were contending. On the one side rashness, inexperience, and incapacity had combined to court the disaster, of which, on the other side, skill, knowledge, and undeniable valour had taken the fullest advantage.

On the night of Saturday, February 26th, 1881, Sir George Colley had occupied Amajuba with a force of thirty-five officers and six hundred and ninety-three men, unsupported by a single piece of artillery, since it had been found impossible to get the guns to the top of the mountain. Against him was pitted a force of Boers whose strength will probably never be accurately known any more than its losses will, but which was probably not less than three thousand men in all, not a man of whom pulled a trigger till he had made sure that his bullet would find its mark.

On the night of Friday, February 26th, 1897, the army of the Transvaal, thirty-five thousand strong, fully equipped with artillery and machine-guns, and all the appliances of modern war that money could buy, and reinforced by between ten and twelve thousand Free State burghers and fugitive rebels from the Cape and Natal, confronted a British force posted along the chain of hills which form the northern frontier-bulwarks of Natal, and this force numbered between twenty-four and twenty-five thousand men of all arms.

Of these some ten thousand were composed of the Regulars which had formed the garrison of Maritzburg at the outbreak of the war, the Volunteer forces of the colony, and the loyal burghers, and last but not least the Johannesburg contingent, which, under the leadership of Commander Robinson, now duly gazetted Colonel in the Colonial forces,

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had brought the survivors of the Golden City so brilliantly through the heart of the enemy's country.

From the Cape had come a force of some fifteen thousand men, almost identical as regards composition with the two armies which had won the triumphs of Caledon, Hex River, Worcester, and Tulbagh Basin, and with them had come up from the fleet a Naval Brigade about a thousand strong, who held a post of honour on the historic Laings Nek with three Maxims, two Maxim-Nordenfeldts, and two seven-pounders.

Along the rest of the British lines were planted in every possible position of advantage nearly a hundred and fifty pieces of artillery and machine-guns, from forty-pounder quick-firers to the light ·45 Maxims. To pit against these the Boer army had about a hundred guns, from the 15 centimetre Krupp field-piece to the ·45 Maxim.

The reason for this great superiority of the British force in artillery furnishes an important clue to the true inwardness of the situation. This time the Boers, instead of a brave but rash and, for this kind of warfare, quite incompetent General, had to deal with a man far-seeing, perfectly acquainted with their method of warfare, and as shrewd and hard-headed as the best of them.

It was a master-stroke of strategy that had drawn the whole strength of the Transvaal into the plains of Volksrust and the slopes of the Drakensberg. Since the fall of Bloemfontein not a waggon load of food had entered the Transvaal, and very little had got in between then and the taking of Delagoa Bay. The rinderpest had made frightful havoc of the flocks and herds of the Boer, now his mainstay and almost his sole means of subsistence, and the meaning of all this was that the Boer army would soon be forced to fight, not only for victory but for food.

For a week now the two armies had confronted each other, each ever growing in strength as reinforcements came up, but not a shot had been fired from the English lines beyond sighting shots to get the range of the different Boer positions, and those which had been fired strictly on the defensive to repel isolated and insignificant attacks, or to drive back parties of Boers who wanted to make too close an acquaintance with the disposition of the British forces.

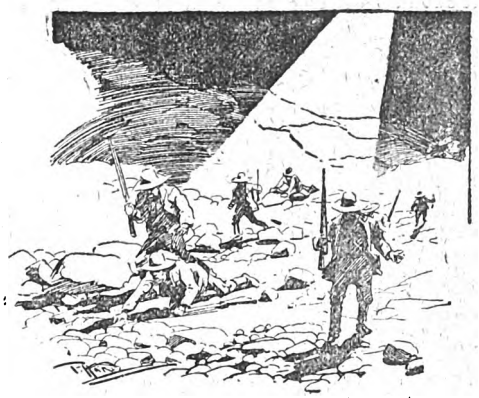
Sir Charles Warren's orders had been as strict as his plan of action was clear and perfectly defined. Not a man was to show himself, not a shot was to be fired, and not a move

The army of the Transvaal, reinforced by the Free State burghers, confronted a British force.

was to be made save in obedience to his specific commands. The defensive attitude was rigidly adhered to, his communications with the coast were rapid and unimpeded, his commissariat was in perfect order, and he could feed his army indefinitely and wait his time at his ease, while the Boers ere long must either fight or starve.

Hence they must be the attacking force. They must storm the krantzes and kopjes, and make their way through the deep defiles which, the moment that they attempted the task, would be swept clear by the death-storms that would burst from rifle and cannon and machine-gun.

The Boer leaders knew this as well as Sir Charles himself



A long white shaft of light flashed down.

did, and they knew, too, that unless they could strike the decisive blow swiftly, now that the crisis of Fate had really come, General Carrington, with his victorious army of some sixteen thousand men, flushed with triumph and burning to take their share in paying off the long-standing score, would cross the Klip River and take them in flank. If this happened before the British positions had been stormed, nothing but utter rout and disastrous retreat on Pretoria could follow.

Their only chance of victory, even of salvation, thus lay in defeating the two British forces in turn before they had time to unite. It was therefore for reasons of prudence as well as of sentiment that the anniversary of Amajuba had been chosen for the general assault.

But, as it chanced, the elements themselves conspired to enable the British commander to most effectually counter the first move of President Kruger and his generals. Darkness had come down in the midst of an absolute calm on earth and in the air, a gloom so black and impenetrable that all sense of distance and direction seemed lost in it. Overhead the clouds hung black and low, almost level with the flat top of Amajuba.

Conditions more perfectly suited to surprise-attacks or secret flanking-movements could not have been imagined, and the Boer leaders decided to take advantage of them. So about nine o'clock, when the darkness had become complete, an irregular column of three thousand Boers on foot, armed with rifle and revolver, moved out from the right wing to the westward of Volksrust, and began to ascend the slopes between the Inquela Mountain and Amajuba, while another, nearly five thousand strong, also on foot, began to make its way towards the northern slopes leading up to Laings Nek on either side of the railway tunnel.

Within the English lines all was darkness and absolute silence. Of all the thousands of men that were there, not one gave a sign of his presence, and the Boers crept on, growing more and more certain with every yard they made, that they would be able to carry out their design, and gain the two coveted positions from which, when the light came back, they would be able to deliver their contemplated flank-attacks when the general assault was made on the front.

But suddenly, when they were a little more than half way up the slopes, something like a big, white, many-rayed star blazed out above the highest point of Amajuba, and then,

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to their amazement and consternation, it began to rise slowly into the air, and move about to and fro. Then a long white shaft of light flashed down from it, hovered for a moment or two in mid-air, and then fell on the middle slopes below Laings Nek and showed them to be crowded with stealthily creeping figures.

Instantly the whole of that side of the mountain seemed to burst out into thunder and flame: the booming of the

The Naval Brigade was slowly rolling the column back.

big guns roared through the rattle and crash of the lighter artillery, and all down the slope the quick flashes of the bursting shells blazed out, and the hurricane storm of bullets went spattering over the stones, ripping up the turf, and striking men down by scores. Then the cannonade stopped, ringing cheers burst out from the rocks above, and the Naval Brigade charged down with the bayonet on to the astounded Boers. At first they gave way before the irresistible rush, but after a while the confidence of superior numbers came back to them, and they turned and gave back shot for shot, and blow for blow.

Meanwhile the light from the clouds had veered round to the eastward, sweeping the plain as it went until it stopped and rested across the path of the second column. Then the storm of shot and shell burst out again from a score of hidden batteries, and so fierce was the converging fire that for a few minutes the head of the column melted away as it advanced. Then came the sound of a bugle, the sharp, ringing rattle of steel, and a brief order, followed by a cheer and the stamping of many feet.

Out of the gloom of the defiles, with the white light behind them gleaming on their bayonets, and shining full in the dazzled eyes of the attacking column, five hundred redcoats of the Hampshire and Leicestershire Regiments came at a double, and from a thousand points about the rugged hillsides little jets of pale flame spurted out, and a swift pattering hail of bullets began to rain down on every portion of the Boer column that the light fell upon.

Instantly, and as though by instinct, every man of them went down among the stones, taking what shelter he could find, and an irregular but pretty effective volley was poured into the advancing redcoats. A score or so of the brave fellows rolled over, their fighting done for ever, but the rest were close up now, and there was no time for another volley before their angrily-exultant cheer rang out, and their united charge brought the bayonets within striking distance.

It was a strange scene of mingled light and darkness, and the work was after Mr. Tommy Atkins' own heart. Thanks to the authorities which rule his fate, he is not very much of a shot, but put a bayonet on the end of his rifle and get him within arm's length of his enemy and he is about the most dangerous fighting animal on earth. As the light hovered down the defile up which the Boers had sought to make their secret entry, it showed them to be split up in groups lying or crouching down under cover. As each of these groups were disclosed, a party of the Leicester-hire and Hampshire men went at it, broke it up, and routed it out.

Meanwhile a dozen field search-lights had begun to flash hither and thither about the slopes of the mountain, and by their light it could be seen that the Naval Brigade was slowly rolling the other column back, while far out on the veldt the piercing beams showed huge, dim shapes of squadrons of horse and foot, with here and there a battery of artillery, all in motion and all converging on the British centre.

CHAPTER XLIII.

The Waterloo of Africa.

For the moment it seemed as though the army of the Transvaal were about to follow up the flanking attempt of the two columns by a general assault under cover of the darkness. They, too, brought their searchlights into play, and opened a heavy cannonade on the batteries which they were able to locate, but hardly had their gunners got to work than guns began to flash out all along the whole line of the British positions, and the terribly destructive effect of the forty-pound shells as they burst about their batteries speedily convinced the Boer artillerists that they had far heavier metal than their own to contend against, and many more guns to boot.

As the attack of the two columns had manifestly failed as a surprise, and as President Kruger and his generals felt that in spite of their great superiority in numbers they had no men to spare, they ordered the columns to fall back on the main lines at once—a movement which they performed with somewhat more of prudent haste than manly dignity. The Naval Brigade and the Red-coats pursued them till they were recalled by the bugle, and then all of a sudden the firing stopped, the lights died out, and darkness and silence reigned supreme again.

These two abortive attacks had taught the Boers three things. First, that however quiet they might keep their men, the British commanders were not to be caught napping; second, that to carry the positions by direct assault from the front could only be done at enormous cost of life; and, third, that the British artillery was vastly superior to theirs both in strength and handling. In view of these circumstances it was resolved, after about half-an-hour's consultation, to make an immediate move under cover of the darkness on Wakkerstroom, a town on the extreme right of the British position, seven or eight miles to the south-east of Volksrust.

The march was accomplished with the celerity and secrecy which has always characterised the movements of the Boer forces, and by daybreak fully twenty thousand men with fifteen guns were within striking distance of the little township.

The balance of the night had passed without any further manifestations of hostility against the British centre and left, and at daybreak Sir Charles Warren ordered his advanced batteries to open the battle by shelling Volksrust, about which some twelve or fifteen thousand Boers, with half the force of the States Artillery, were concentrated. Almost at the same time the eastern division of the Transvaal Army began to shell Wakkerstroom, which had been occupied some days by a force of about three thousand men with six field-pieces and four Maxims.

The moment that the daylight became bright enough for accurate shooting, the Boers, impelled by the urgent orders of their Generals and an earnest appeal from the President, accepted the inevitable, and advanced to a general assault. It was now that the advantages of that mode of fighting of which they are such perfect masters became manifest.

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As Sir Evelyn Wood had said after the first war, they were the finest mounted infantry in the world.

They swept at a gallop over the exposed portions of the veld. Scores of them fell under the rapid and accurate artillery and machine-gun fire, but still the columns kept on in open order and with the determined bravery, for now indeed there was no turning back.

Somehow or other the summit of the ridge had to be gained, and the British line pierced. If this were not done they might hurl themselves again and again against the impregnable mountain wall until their strength was fully broken, and then the British centre and left would swing round and take the force which was attacking Wakkerstroom in the rear.

Their advance was covered by the guns on the heights to the eastward of Volksrust, which kept up an incessant fire on the British batteries, and under it they pushed on with dogged and desperate valour, until at last the broken ground of the slopes was reached, and there among the boulders, rocks, and intersecting ravine, thousands of men seemed to be swallowed up by the earth as completely as though it had opened beneath them. Then, as soon as this movement had been accomplished, their artillery began to move, battery by battery, round to the eastward with the obvious intention of concentrating the attack upon Wakkerstroom, where the British line was weakest.

Shortly after nine o'clock two columns led by Lucas Meyer and Schalk Burger, each about four thousand strong, advanced in the teeth of a terribly destructive fire up each side of the railway line along the incline which leads to the mouth of the Laings Nek tunnel. They came on in their usual fashion, riding hard when the ground was good, and then, the moment they reached anything like cover, stopping, dismounting, and pouring in their volleys with deliberate aim and fatal effect. Not a man in the British lines could show himself but a bullet found him and he went over either dead or badly wounded.

Simultaneously from the broken ground to the right there rose up thousands of spurts of fire and little transient puffs of steamy smoke, and the upper slopes of the mountain and the ridge were swept by an incessant hail of bullets which struck down every man and horse that was not under cover.

Shells were rained upon the ground occupied by the hidden sharp-shooters, and these, bursting among the rocks and stones, did terrible execution, but the Boer marksmen stuck manfully to their positions, and meanwhile the German gunners of the States Artillery were making excellent practice with their 15-centimetre Krupps, and the execution done by shell-fire was by no means all on one side.

Yard by yard Commandants Meyer and Burger fought their way up the line, losing heavily, but inflicting equal loss in their turn, dodging from stone to stone, and shooting down nearly every man who showed himself, with an aim which was wonderfully steady and accurate considering the circumstances. For a time it seemed as though their numbers, their excellent shooting, and their really admirable resolution must carry all before them and take them through the heart of the British centre.

They were fighting for everything that they had on the very ground on which they had won their independence sixteen years before, and many a man of them remembered as he sent his bullets home how he had climbed these same heights as a boy and laughed at the English *rooibaatjes* as they fled like sheep down the hillsides, while he took pot-shots at their flying forms as he would have done at a herd of buck.

But, however worthy of a better fate their valour may have been, their hopes were destined to a sudden and bitter disappointment. The set and studied warfare of to-day was not the irregular skirmishing which they had called battles sixteen years before. It was a thing of deliberate calculation and almost mathematical exactness. They never guessed that they had in reality been allowed to come thus far, any more than they suspected by what means they would be prevented from going farther.

They had got to within about two hundred yards of the tunnel when suddenly the fire from the batteries stopped. Thinking that the British ammunition had failed, or that an English flag of the usual colour was about to be hoisted,

The armoured train came rushing down the incline right into their midst.

they raised a loud, hoarse shout of triumph, and rushed forward, crowding on to the line from both sides.

Then out of the mouth of the tunnel there came a dull rumble rapidly growing louder; then a drifting cloud of mingled smoke and steam rolled out, and then, like some strange demon of destruction emerging from the very bowels of the earth, Commander Robertson's armoured train, the now famous "No. 3," thundered out of the darkness into the light, and came rushing down the incline right into the midst of them.

The shout of triumph was instantly changed for yells and cries of astonishment and terror, but these were speedily drowned by the grinding roar and rattle of the machine and quick-firing guns with which the armoured train was bristling from end to end. It was in vain that they struggled in a now tumultuous mob to get clear of the line in time, and to regain the cover of the rocks, and stones, and broken ground.

The pitiless iron monster rushed down on them at a speed of nearly forty miles an hour, hurling them dead or maimed to right and left, or grinding them out of all human shape under its wheels, and those who had escaped its rush went down in hundreds on either hand, and in front of it, under the hurricane of shells and bullets which it continued to vomit forth, until the ground within the zone of fire was literally swept clear of every living thing, after which the two engines of the armoured train were reversed, and it climbed up the incline and disappeared into the tunnel out of reach of the Boer artillerists.

Then the batteries opened out afresh on the hidden marksmen to the eastward, and, after a brief and deadly storm of shell-fire, the Hampshire Regiment, the Cape Highlanders, a detachment of Cape Rifles, the Natal Royals, and the Durban Light Infantry were ordered to go in with the bayonet and clear them out.

But the fate of the two attacking columns, which had been almost annihilated before they got under cover or out of range, had for the time being taken a good deal of the heart out of them, and added to this, now that they were deprived of the support of the columns, they stood a very good chance of being surrounded. Their leaders, therefore, decided not to wait for a taste of the dreaded cold steel. The result was that before the Loyalist brigade got within

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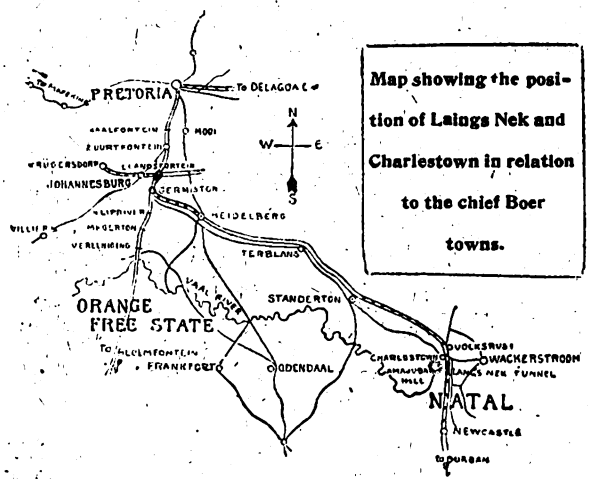
charging distance, they had mounted and were riding for their lives to gain the shelter of their batteries.

Meanwhile three other attacks had been taking place simultaneously—one upon the Nek, between Amajuba and the Inquela Mountain, another along the Free State Border to the extreme British left, and another on Wakkerstroom to the extreme right, and by this time over sixty thousand men and nearly two hundred guns were actually engaged.



Map showing the position of Laings Nek and Charlestown in relation to the chief Boer towns.

Laings Nek, as has been seen, had proved itself as impregnable to the Boers as, sixteen years before, it had proved to the British. On the other Pass the Naval Brigade, supported by three companies of the Cape Mounted Infantry and two of the Natal Frontier Force, hurled back assault after assault during nearly two hours of continuous fighting. To the left also the attack from the direction of Gans Vlei, made by three thousand of the Free State burghers, who had come over to help their kinsmen, was held in check for over an hour, and finally repulsed with severe loss by fifteen hundred men of the Australian and Canadian contingents supported by two companies of the Natal Carbineers.

But by far the severest contest was by this time being waged round Wakkerstroom, the attack on which was led by the veteran Commandant-General Joubert and the President himself, with Colonel Henning Protorious directing the artillery. Wakkerstroom was now so far the key of the position, that if the Boers succeeded in taking it they would be able to turn the British right and force a retreat on Charlestown and Newcastle.

Sir Charles Warren was therefore forced to considerably weaken his extended line in order to send up the necessary reinforcements; and even when he had sent every man that he could spare, without losing the command of the practicable roads through his centre and left, the assailants still outnumbered the defenders by more than two to one, and reinforcements were continually coming in from the north and west.

It was here that the most desperate battle of the whole war took place. The Boers, fighting under the eyes of their President, and led by their most skilful leaders, made use of every advantage that their style of warfare and perfect acquaintance with the ground gave them. No fewer than four times were the British regulars and Colonial forces driven out of the town, and four times, as the reinforcements came up the road from Charlestown, did they go in and drive the Boers out in their turn.

When the news was brought up to the President of the repulse of the attacks on the centre and left, and of the decimation of the columns of Commandant Meyer and Burger, he ordered every available man and gun to be brought up, so that he might concentrate the whole strength on Wakkerstroom and roll up the British right by sheer weight of numbers. He saw clearly—just as clearly as Sir Charles Warren himself did—that if he could once get possession of Wakkerstroom and the Charlestown Road the British positions would be turned, and the day would be his. As a matter of fact, the fate of that little town among the hills was just then the fate of Africa.

As hour after hour went by and more of the Boer troops were brought up and more of the guns got into position the more the good fortune of the morning seemed in danger of being turned to naught, yet the Loyalists, outnumbered by fully three to one, and now over-matched in artillery as well, fought on with a resolution which refused to recognise the possibility of defeat.

At length, about three o'clock in the afternoon, Sir Charles Warren, who was standing with General Goodenough and his staff on the spur of a hill watching the battle, shook his head and said:

"It's no use. They're too strong down yonder, and they are getting reinforcements every hour. We must have every man up and every gun that can be moved. If we lose Wakkerstroom it's all up. I confess I never thought these fellows would fight so splendidly as they have done. I hope to God Carrington gets here before nightfall. I can understand just now what Wellington felt at Waterloo. Hullo What the dickens is up now? They can't be retreating just as they had almost got the place. However, let every man we've got be thrown into the place. If they begin to move, we must keep them moving. They've evidently had some pretty startling news."

"Ah, listen!" interrupted General Goodenough, holding up his hand. "I fancy I heard guns and machine-fire to the westward. I wonder whether they're ours or Carrington's?"

"If they're Carrington's," replied Sir Charles quietly,

"I confess I never thought these fellows would fight so splendidly."

"South Africa will be ours by sundown. If not—well, I suppose it will be something like Waterloo with Blucher left out."

CHAPTER XLIV.

"REMEMBER WHERE YOU ARE, BOYS!"

THE immediate cause of the unexpected movement in the then headquarters of the Transvaal army, and the rapid withdrawal of the now overwhelmingly numerous forces which had been poured out into Wakkerstroom

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was the arrival of half-a-dozen mounted men, whose horses didn't seem to have another stride left in them.

They had come at a gallop from beyond the extreme British left with the news that a new British army, led by the redoubtable and cordially-hated "Butcher Carrington," had fought its way across the Klip river in the teeth of a strenuous opposition from the Free State burghers and the garrison that was left in Volksrust, and was advancing rapidly along the southern bank of the Vaal.

It was composed of British regulars and sailors, Rhodesian troopers, and that legion of Matabele warriors whose fame had already spread through the length and breadth of the two Republics. In addition to these, clouds of wild horsemen, no doubt the ever-dreaded Basutos, had been seen massed along the Free State side of the Klip river, seemingly ready to cross at a moment's notice.

No more momentous or exasperating news could possibly have been conveyed to President Kruger and his generals than this. In another couple of hours at most they must inevitably have marched through the ruins of Wakkerstroom into Natal. From there to Charlestown would have been little more than a military promenade. At Charlestown they would have seized the railway, then Newcastle would have fallen, and after that Maritzburg, from whence they could have dictated terms of peace to the British Government, as they virtually had done after the first battle of Amajuba.

If something had only delayed the coming of this man who had so unexpectedly brought the beginnings of trouble upon them in the North, all might and probably would have been well, but that something had not happened, and here he had come just in time to snatch the fruits of almost certain victory from them.

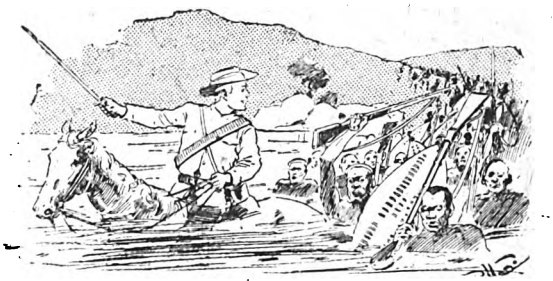
To continue the assault on Wakkerstroom would now be little short of madness, for the news must soon reach the British Commander-in-Chief. His troops, inspired with new hope, would fight with redoubled resolution, and even an hour's delay would be fatal. The troops occupying the British centre and left would join hands with their deliverers, and the army of the Transvaal, caught on front and flank and rear, assailed by fresh and victorious troops, and flanked by unknown thousands of the fierce and vengeful Basutos, would be hemmed in among the mountains and cut to pieces in detail. An instant retreat on Volksrust was the only possible road to safety, and a pitched battle under the shadow of Amajuba Hill offered the now only remaining hope of victory.

Hardly had the orders to retreat begun to be obeyed by the reluctant and wondering Boers when the sun, which had been obscured for the greater part of the day, burst suddenly through the dissolving clouds like an omen of new hope for the army which had been so nearly defeated, and instantly the heliograph signals began to flash from the westward from point to point along the range, conveying the good tidings to the British generals.

A brief consultation resulted in the immediate issue of orders for the whole British force to advance and press upon the rear of the retreating Boers. Meanwhile, too, signals were flashed back to the left, informing General Carrington of the position of affairs, and ordering all the lighter batteries to be pushed forward so as to command the drifts of the Vaal and Klip rivers, and to the armoured train, to hold itself in readiness to advance as far as the state of the line would permit it, and, if necessary, to prevent any attack on the part of the Boers to retreat by train from Volksrust.

The position of affairs now virtually resolved itself into a race between the army of the Transvaal, and what must now be called the two sections of the British forces. If the Boer leaders could get their men back across the Klip River, and reach Volksrust before they were caught between the two converging armies, they might possibly give successful battle to both of them, for it was probable that they were still equal in numbers of both combined. But if General Carrington succeeded in getting to Volksrust first they would have no alternative save unconditional surrender or fighting their battle with an enemy on both flanks and the guns of the British mountain batteries in their rear.

The retreat, however, speedily resolved itself into a running fight. The British troops in the enthusiasm of re-action from the dogged resolution to die where they stood rather than let the enemy set foot on British soil, to the new-born hope of joining hands with their comrades from the west, and crushing that enemy in the grim embrace of battle, forgot all the fatigue of the long hours of



The Basutos were taken across the river.

fighting; wounds ceased to give pain, hunger and thirst seemed to vanish as if by magic, and all that they remembered was that they had nearly been defeated, and that men of their own blood and race had saved them from the impending disaster.

Men who a few minutes before had been longing to lie down and go to sleep through sheer weariness, now stepped out with long swinging strides as though they had just turned out of their bivouacs. Three batteries of the States Artillery were charged and carried with a rush in the very act of lumbering up to follow the retreat, and it was even a matter of some difficulty for the British officers to restrain their men from pressing imprudently close on the rear of the retiring enemy, so great are the marvels that new-born hope can accomplish.

General Carrington, the Blücher of this later Waterloo, had made a series of forced marches of some hundred and forty miles in six days, from Blauwbosch Pont, on the Bloemfontein-Johannesburg railway, where he had detrained his men, to the banks of the Klip river, at the point where it cuts through the Drakensberg range to the west of Volksrust.

He had reached the drift shortly after two on the afternoon of the day of battle.

His passage had been opposed by a force of about two thousand Free State burghers, who had checked him for about half-an-hour until Major Bryan had taken his dusky warriors through the water about a mile to the westward, and thrown them in a furious charge on their right flank, at the same moment that the fifteen hundred Australians and the two companies of Natal Carbineers, who had held the position on the extreme British left, came down the slopes and took them in the rear.

These two attacks crushed them up together in such fashion that a few minutes machine-gun and artillery fire across the river on their centre broke them up into utter disorder.

Then the Rhodesian troopers charged through the drift, closely followed by the Leicestershire and York and Lancaster Regiments with the bayonet, and ten minutes later they were scattering over the plain carrying the news of disaster to Volksrust and Wakkerstroom.

Not a moment was lost, for no one knew how much might be dependent just then upon rapid movement. The artillery and machine-guns were ferried across on barrel

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rafts, which had been brought along for the purpose, and all the waggons, save the lighter ones that carried the ammunition, were left behind.

The Basuto horsemen were taken across the river and told to push north-eastward, and place themselves between Volksrust and Standerton, to cut off the Boer retreat to the north, and then General Carrington led the rest of his army straight on the Transvaal frontier-town.

Just as it debouched on to the open plain between the slopes of the mountains and Volksrust the head of the

In the centre of one of the groups rose the burly form of the President.

Transvaal army was sighted in full retreat from the east ward, and the roll of continuous firing came rumbling up from their rear.

"That's all right!" said the General, with characteristic terseness of speech. "Sir Charles is coming up behind them. We've got the hills to the south, and the Basutos to the north, and if they get away now it will be our fault."

That was the situation in a sentence. Orders were given with rapidity and decision, and obeyed just as rapidly and precisely. The artillery and cavalry went over the ground almost at a gallop. Troop after troop and battery after battery deployed into its appointed position, and soon the flash of the guns and the scream and bang of the bursting shells, mingling with the crash and roar of the machine-guns on front and flank and rear, told the leaders of the Transvaal army that they had lost the race and that the hour of destiny was about to strike.

What happened during the next two hours was rather a *mêlée* on a gigantic scale than a set battle. There were hurricanes of shot and shell and machine-fire, followed by furious charges of horse, met by deadly volleys of rifle-fire, and checked only to give place to rushes of infantry and the terrible work of bullet and bayonet at close quarters.

Briton and Boer fought their best, each fighting for life and country, and one side, at least, in payment of a long-deferred debt of vengeance and insult and the vindication of a too-long outraged national honour.

The peasant soldiery of the Transvaal fought as it had never fought before and would never fight again.

All the long hatred born of real and fancied wrongs blazed up into a fierce fury within them which knew neither fear nor common prudence.

As the two armies joined battle for the last time General Carrington, after giving his last orders, pointed with his sword to the frowning heights of Amajuba and said:

"Remember where you are boys, and whose graves there are up yonder!"

And his words had flown like a battle-signal through the ranks, echoed from lip to lip, and the men looked up and remembered the shameful story of that day sixteen years ago, and there was not a man of them all but swore in his heart that before the next sun rose that shame should be wiped away for ever from the British arms.

Foot by foot, and yard by yard the ring of British steel closed in round all that was left of the doomed army that had set out to conquer Africa for the Africander. The way by the bridge, across the spruit, was barred by the armoured train, from the guns of which death-dealing tempests of shot and shell burst forth whenever an attempt waa made to force a retreat that way.

Along the banks of the spruit itself were the long, dusky lines and reddened bayonets of the Matabele Legion, and beyond, circling round between Volksrust and the open veld, were the dark, swiftly-moving forms of the Basuto horsemen, cutting off all hope of retreat to the north. West and south and east were the British regiments and the British batteries, and in the midst a vast, formless mob of men, which now could no longer be called an army.

Every now and then some of the encircling regiments would wheel back, the batteries would burst out in smoke and flame, and a whistling, screaming stream of shot and shell would tear its way through the crowded masses of men and horses, leaving long, wide gaps and lanes behind it strewn with struggling forms and others who would never struggle again.

Then, before the gaps and lanes could close, the British horse charged in with swinging sabre and swift-thrusting lance, breaking the great mass up like wedges of steel driven into the heart of some great prostrate tree, until at length it became disintegrated into smaller masses, each fighting for its own hand with the grim valour of a despair which knew that all was lost and yet refused to yield.

In the centre of the largest of these groups rose conspicuous the burly form of the old President, seated on a big, brown horse and surrounded by a devoted band of his comrades and kinsmen, determined, like him, to die in the death-hour of their nation and their hopes. Saving for the different conditions of warfare, it was the scene of Flodden Field over again, and, as the chivalry and devotion of Scotland had closed round their King four hundred years before, so now the peasant soldiers of the Transvaal closed round their stout old chief, and there was not a man of them who would dream of ceasing fire until his last cartridge had been shot away, or he had heard from the President's lips the words of surrender that he knew he would never speak.

CHAPTER XLV.

The Last Stand.

One of the most curious lessons that the history of nations teaches is the undeniable fact that the Fates delight in anti-climaxes. Over and over again, just as some human being has worked himself or herself up to within measurable distance of the apex of mundane glory, the Fates—who have been seriously suspected of treating the whole of human existence as a colossal practical joke—have introduced some ridiculous triviality into the seemingly great problem that was being worked out, and thereby reduced the conclusion to something very like absurdity.

Thus, for instance, just at the period when Alexander the Great was about to seat himself upon the throne of the world, he took those few goblets of wine too many which brought him face to face with the Conqueror who conquers all worlds.

Socrates marred the sublimity of an otherwise incomparable life by so far provoking Zantippe as to cause her to empty a bucket of slops over his venerable head.

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Mark Antony lost the world at Actium to follow the flutter of a flying petticoat.

William the Conqueror died on account of a clumsy joke.

Musa, the Moslem conqueror of Spain, might have taken Europe too if he had not dyed his beard red and flogged a brother of the faith for making rude remarks about it.

Charles V. might have fixed the policy of the civilised world for centuries if he had not suddenly become possessed of the idea that he was better fitted for the cloister than the throne.

Pizarro might have founded an empire which would have dwarfed that of his master if he had not sat a little too long over breakfast on that memorable day when the conspirators came into his room in the palace of Lima and found him lolling in doublet and hose instead of breastplate and greaves.

Napoleon must almost infallibly have won Waterloo, and with it Europe, but for a perfectly commonplace downfall of rain which kept his artillery stuck in the mud for the two hours during which it was most wanted, and so on through innumerable instances which might be quoted from Alexander's day down to the hour in which the heroism of President Kruger and his devoted kinsmen and comrades was turned into the nothingness of wholly unmerited pathos and absurdity by the inventive daring of a person whose name he had never even heard of.

For reasons which extended beyond the immediate results of the present battle, the commanders of the two wings of the British force had issued the most stringent orders that the portion of what had once been the army of the Transvaal which surrounded President Kruger, Commandant-General Joubert, and certain other personages whose importance in the past rendered them desirable acquisitions for the future should not be subjected to the battery fire which had been employed with such terrible effect upon the other portions.

In other words, it was, for reasons of State, most desirable that the President should either be induced by the logic of circumstances to surrender, or else be taken alive. Of his surrendering the events of the last hour or so proved that there was not the remotest chance. He was evidently determined to fight to the bitter end and die as a man, even as his people would die as a nation in the hour of his fate and theirs.

Of his capture alive there seemed just as little chance. That ring of rugged, devoted heroes which surrounded him could be broken by nothing save artillery or machine-gun-fire, and that would slay both him and them.

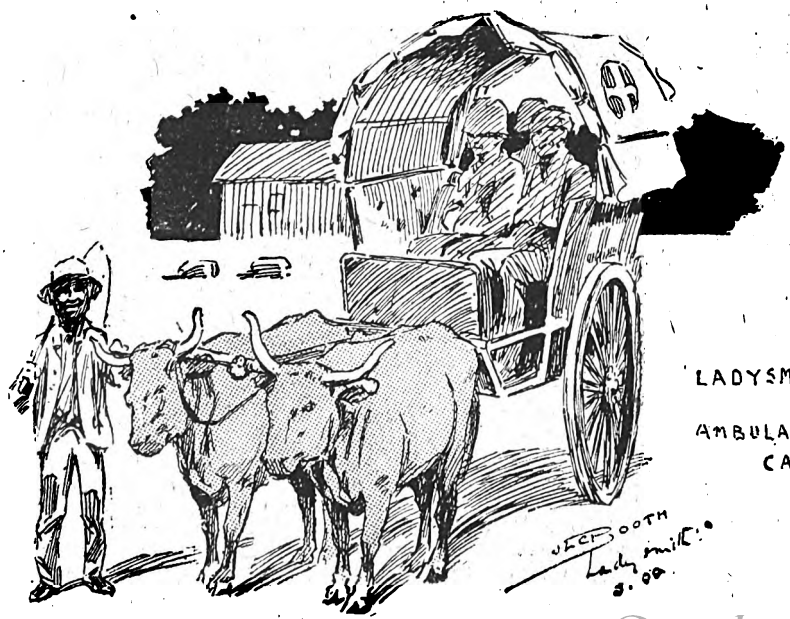
To break it by any other means seemed impossible. Time after time the British horse and foot charged up in turn with lance and sword and bayonet, only to be flung back by the storm of unerring rifle bullets which burst out from it as they came within pistol shot. Empty saddles, wounded and writhing horses, and decimated ranks were the only result, and not a few of the most death-dealing bullets had been sped by the rifle which the brave old man was loading and sighting and firing as quickly and as truly as the youngest and clearest-eyed of his protectors.

But there was a third element of chance which would soon come into play.

In less than an hour it would be dark and under cover of the dense gloom of the African summer night, it was possible that this devoted band of rude, unlettered heroes might fight their way to freedom with the chief for whom they were ready to risk all dangers in their midst.

If this could have been so, the Epic of Amajuba would have had a more fitting because a more heroic end. But the laughter-loving Fates and the inventive faculty of Sergeant Jackson P. Bethell, late of the Rhodesian Horse, and now of the Matabele Legion, were against it.

(To be continued.)



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SHORT STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "The Vibart Affair," by G. Manville Fenn, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mrs. Eaton, 42 Hartington Road, West Derby, Liverpool. Attempts for this week's prize must deal with FUNNY STORIES ABOUT DOGS, and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, June 11th, Post-cards only, please.

Blameless.

DURING a recent railway disaster, an official was going round among the injured asking their names and addresses, when he came upon a ploughman.

He asked him his name and address in case of any compensation having to be made.

The ploughman replied:

"Man, what are ye makin' all the noise about? It wasn't me that knocked yer bloomin' train off the line."

M. E.

Sixpenn'rth for a Penny.

IN a recent case for compensation brought by a tobacconist against a railway company, the cross-examining counsel, who considered himself particularly smart, asked the plaintiff:

"But you don't really make £1,000 a year out of this little shop, do you?"

"Oh, yes, I do," replied the tobacconist emphatically.

"But how?"

"Well, you see," said the witness confidentially, "it's the situation of the shop. I get a lot of gents in late at night, who call for a sixpenny or shilling cigar, and I give 'em a Whitechapel penny 'un, and bless you! they don't know."

"Oh, nonsense!" said the counsel contemptuously, "you don't expect to make me believe you can do that?"

The witness waxed warm. Eyeing counsel with indignation, he retorted:

"Oh, can't I? Well, I've done it to you a good many times!"

And counsel collapsed.

J. M. W.

One Consolation.

MRS. MCGINTY had just lost her son, and the village parson had called on her for the purpose of comforting her in her distress. They talked of his many virtues, and in the sadness of the moment forgot his failings.

"Do not grieve, my good soul," said the parson, feelingly. "Remember that these great trials are always mercies in disguise."

The old woman pondered over these words for a few minutes, and then a light suddenly came into her eyes.

"Yes," she replied, "that's true. Now I come to think of it, Edward always was a big eater!"

J. L. M.

"With this Piece of Brick."

A LABOURER in a shipyard was one day given a two-foot rule to measure a piece of iron plate. Not being accustomed to the use of the rule, he returned it, after wasting a good deal of time.

"Well, Mike," asked his superior officer, "what is the size of the plate?"

"Well," replied Mike, with the smile which accompanies duty performed, "it's the length of your rule and two thumbs over, with this piece of brick and the breadth of my hand and arm, from here to there, bar a finger."

C. M.

Borrowing a Posture.

AN old woman whose husband was ill in bed sent for the doctor, who came and saw the old lady.

"I will send him some medicine," he said on leaving, "which must be taken in a recumbent posture."

After he had gone the old woman sat down, greatly puzzled.

"The recumbent posture—the recumbent posture!" she kept repeating. "I haven't got one."

At last she thought, "I will go and see if old Mrs. Smith has got one to lend me."

Accordingly she went and said to her neighbour:

"Have you a recumbent posture to lend me to put some medicine in?"

Mrs. Smith, who was equally as ignorant as her friend, replied:

"I had one, but to tell you the truth I have lost it."

R. T. F.

She Must Have Been Very Bad.

IN this day of slang and slipshod English it is quite refreshing to find one home in which our mother tongue is appreciated, and sins against its purity duly resented.

That there is at least one such was made evident in a quarrel which took place in a literary household between the two youngest inmates—a quarrel, like most childish differences, soon over, but fierce while it lasted.

When his wrath had reached its height, the small son of the house, quivering with anger, sought for language to denounce his sister, who had been the aggressor.

"You bad," he burst forth, stamping a stubby shoe. "You bad, you *bad*——" Words failed him.

Then with a flash of truly literary inspiration, he concluded: "You *bad grammar*, you!"

L. V.

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Followed the Cookery-book.

MRS. SAUNDERS, a recently-married lady, had no practical knowledge of cooking, but she bought a cookery-book, and made an earnest effort to overcome her deficiencies.

"I wish you would make me a lemon-pie for dinner," said Mr. Saunders one day. "My mother use to make such nice lemon-pies."

"Well, if you want any lemon-pies you can get your mother to make them for you. I'll not do it!" she said warmly.

"Why? I am surprised to hear you talk like that."

"I don't care if you are surprised. I'm not going to burn myself for anyone. I was reading the recipe in the cookery-book yesterday, and it winds up: 'Then sit on a hot fire and stir constantly.' I expect everyone would stir constantly while sitting on a hot fire, but I'm not going to make any experiments, Catch me sitting on a hot fire!" G. P.

Don't Be Two Literal.

MEN of genius may do things which are forbidden to others.

A well-known artist, visiting a family whose wealth was newly acquired, was ostentatiously pressed by them to come and dine always.

"Always?" said the great man, smiling ironically.

"Yes, always."

He came the next evening, and was received with surprise; the next, and was entertained coldly.

He came every day for a week, until his host, very much annoyed, gave his servants orders to inform the painter that the family had gone out of town.

When he called the next evening he received the message.

"Ah!" said he, "is that so? Well, I will just run up and get my umbrella that I left last night."

He pr sented himself at the table just as the family were seating themselves for the meal, and they will probably never forget the look he bestowed on them as he turned away. A. W. H. S.

But There Were!

THE gentleman living in the suburbs had a goat for the children's pleasure, and it was that kind of a goat which might well be called rambunctious, for it took possession of the place early, and showed little disposition to vacate.

One morning the goat walked out into the children's play-house, and as the gentleman was starting to the City he told the man about the place to drive it out and shut it up in the stables. The man promised, and the master proceeded to his office. At noon the man came to the office on an errand.

"By the way, John," said the master, "did you put that goat in the stables as I told you?"

John began to hedge.

"I was busy, sir, and——"

"Busy be hanged," interrupted the master. "I told you to put it in the stable, and that's what I wanted you to do."

"Yes, sir," parleyed John, "but——"

"There's no buts about it. I——"

"Oh, but there is, sir," interrupted John this time. "If you don't believe me, sir, you just tackle the goat yourself, sir, and you'll see how many 'butts' there are." E. M. T.

No Use for the "Plate."

A STARVED and ragged lad wandered for hours about the London docks in search of work. He had not tasted food since the morning.

A vessel came into dock late in the day, and the cook, seeing the boy, invited him to warm himself and dry his rags at the galley fire.

He then gave the boy a large piece of pork upon a ship's biscuit, which is as hard as a board, and the famished lad ran off to tell his mother (who sold matches close by) of his good luck.

In a short time he returned with the biscuit wrapped in paper and said:

"Mother thanks you, sir, for the pork, and is much obliged to you for the loan of the plate."

W. L.

A Token of Love.

"I WITNESSED a most remarkable sight to-day," said Mr. Brown, bursting into the room where his better half sat perusing the papers. "In fact," he continued, "I might say never in the course of my experience have I seen a policeman in such a peculiar predicament."

"A policeman!" exclaimed Mrs. Brown. "Dear me! Were some roughs ill-treating him?"

"Oh, no! I was just coming along the street, when I saw a policeman on th s very beat with his arm embracing a lamp-post. In fact, I would not be absolutely certain that he was not speaking to it at the same time."

"What extraordinary conduct for a guardian of the law!" interjected Mrs. B. "Was the man intoxicated at all?"

Before the lord and master had time to reply, the indignant voice of the housemaid was heard through the half-opened door:

"'Toxicated! Lor', ma'am, no! That's only a way he's got when he's thinking of me, ma'am!"

R. J. M.

A New Industry.

"WHERE can I get a lot of barbed wire cheap," asked Farmer Furrow of his friend, Doogood.

"Well, they're giving it away in Russia," said old Doogood.

"What for?" gasped the astonished farmer dropping his spade.

"For nothing, of course. You see, after the telegraph wires over there have been used a little while, the Russian language twists them all out of shape and the peasants use them for fences."

Farmer Furrow said nothing, but puffed hard at his pipe and looked at the sky.

H. A. E.

RESULT OF

Top Line Competition.

The prize of One Guinea offered in connection with this Competition has been won by Mr. DAVID BYERS, 24 Ferber Street, Crewe.

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The Tenant at Woodcotes.

BIBLIOTECA BODLEIANA

"It's all right, Dick, so don't you worry; worry s wearing, take my tip."

"My word!" said the other, "but I tell you it's getting on my nerves."

The place was the down platform at Swatton Junction. The first speaker had all the appearance of a typical English gentleman. His luggage lay heaped upon the platform, Gladstone bag, travelling trunk, gun-case and so forth, the usual impedimenta of the man who has nothing to do in life but enjoy himself.

The second man was dressed in the company's uniform. He was in fact the guard of the local train which runs between Swatton Junction and Titherton.

The guard was about to make some further remark to his companion, when a porter came towards them.

He was a loutish looking fellow, a recruit probably from one of the surrounding villages. It struck one that cleaning lamps, washing carriage windows and opening and shutting doors were about as much as he was equal to.

However, the conversation underwent an astonishing change as he came within earshot.

Mr. James J. Oram (his name was lettered across his travelling bag for all the world to see) was saying, condescendingly:

"Yes, the gun-case, the bag and the rug to go in the carriage, my man; the other traps, in the van—and be very careful of them—do you hear?"

"Very good, sir," said the guard, touching his hat, and he crossed to the platform where the "local" stood waiting for passengers from the main line train, already overdue.

'Enery, the porter in question, disappeared into the lamp room, in whose black depths he appeared to spend the greater part of his time.

The train arrived, and 'Enery shut the carriage doors after the passengers who alighted. Then he, too, crossed over to the other platform. The guard was standing at the window of the first class carriage in which Mr. James J. Oram was seated.

"Here's Chawbacon again," said that gentleman. As 'Enery came up the platform the guard was apparently in the act of receiving a gratuity from Mr. Oram.

"And—here my man," said that gentleman as 'Enery was passing, "there's something for you to drink my health with."

'Enery took the something and touched his forelock sheepis ly. He chuckled to himself as he shambled down the platform. No doubt he was thinking of the glass of four-ale, which he would presently be quaffing when his day's work was over.

A smart dog-cart was in attendance at Titherton to take Mr. Oram to his house. It was called Woodcotes. It was not very large, but large enough for a single man. There were only two servants, a housekeeper and a parlour-maid, both of whom he had brought with him from town. The odd man who acted as coachman and gardener did not live in the house.

It was a strange gathering in Mr. Oram's drawing room that evening. The master of the house was seated in an easy chair by the fire, his housekeeper sat facing him, the parlour-maid, divested of both cap and apron, was at the piano. She was singing and her auditors seemed not only reconciled to this somewhat unconventional proceeding, but appeared to be enjoying it.

Presently the door opened. There was little difficulty in recognising the newcomer, though he no longer wore a guard's uniform. He nodded and sat down. When the *soi-disant* parlour-maid had finished her song he crossed over to her and they were soon deeply engaged in conversation.

Presently the master of the house drew him on one side.

"Look here, old chap," he said, "you come here a great deal too often."

"Oh, come, Harry," said the other, "isn't a fellow to sometimes see the girl he's engaged to?"

His host repressed a gesture of impatience.

It was a great piece of good fortune for Mr. James J. Oram when he ran across Dick Rivers. It should be understood that Oram and the celebrated Henry Marsh, thief, forger and general expert in crime, were one and the same person. He had held up banks in Australia, and the mail in the Western States. He had planted bogus securities in Paris, Vienna, Berlin and Amsterdam.

Rivers, though he had not had Marsh's cosmopolitan experience, was himself an old hand. He had, however, secured a post on the line—not, as might be imagined, altogether by straightforward means—and had been leading an honest life for some time until he met Marsh.

Rivers was not won over so easily as expected. It was not until he had visited Mr. Oram several times that he finally agreed to engage in the undertaking. The cause

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was not far to seek. He had fallen in love with Marsh's pretty sister-in-law. The housekeeper was Marsh's wife, the smart parlour-maid her sister.

There was a third person in the plot, but there is no need to say much about him. He was a clerk in Messrs. Bullivant's bank at Valparaiso. For the sum of five hundred pounds he had agreed to cable information as to the shipment of certain cases of gold ingots to Liverpool, to be sent on from there to London.

There were plans to be discussed in the drawing-room that night for the vessel was due in a few days at latest. It was past midnight when Rivers rose to go.

He did not notice, as he shut the garden gate behind him, a figure which stole out from among the evergreens after he had passed. Someone was evidently keeping an eye on Mr. Oram and his friends. He might well have been listening, for the drawing-room window was open at the top. An active man by climbing up the waterspout, which ran up the side of the house, might have heard and seen all that had gone on within.

The next day Mr. James J. Oram took train to Liverpool and waited. The vessel arrived two days later. Having seen it in, he called a cab, drove to the post-office and despatched a wire to Titherton. From the post-office he drove to the station. He booked by the train which carried the ingots. There was only one other passenger in the compartment and he found Mr. Oram a most agreeable companion.

The train was nearing Swatton Junction, when the fireman called his mate's attention to the fact that a plate-layer was signalling them to stop. The driver put on the brake at once. The fireman got down on to the line and questioned the plate-layer. He seemed a surly sort of fellow.

"Line blocked below the signal box—that's all I know," he said. "Maybe it's a goods wagon got loose, maybe not."

And as though it were no business of his to answer idle questions he walked down the line away from the engine.

* * * * *

Mr. James J. Oram rose from his seat, looking at his watch as he did so.

"Dear me," he said, "how very annoying. And I have some friends dining with me to-night. We can't be more than a few minutes from the Junction. I think I will get out and walk."

With many objurgations upon the company for the delay, he opened the door, bade his companion good-night and jumped down upon the track.

But instead of making his way towards the station Mr. Oram went in the opposite direction. He dived just in time between the couplings of some car iages, as he caught sight of the guard's head projecting from the door of his van.

At last he reached the guard's van. He climbed on the footboard and peered through the window; yes, the guard was gone. He had evidently gone up the train to see what was wrong, exactly as they had thought he would.

Rivers had done the job splendidly, too, so far. He had brought the train to a standstill just at the point they had fixed upon. Here the line curved. The guard's van was at the end of the curve and could not be seen from the engine. The pretended platelayer came up at this moment and together they entered the van.

The cases containing the ingots stood ready to hand. The embankment sloped gently down to a lane which ran alongside. The cases were removed from the van and slid down the slope impelled by their own weight. In the lane stood Mr. Oram's dog-cart.

Now Mr. Oram had discharged his coachman the day before. His new coachman, otherwise Dick Rivers, having brought the dog-cart to the scene of operations had promptly transformed himself, with the aid of a suit of fustian and a belcher handkerchief into an excellent imitation of a platelayer.

When the cases had been transferred to the trap it was the work of a few minutes for him to don his coachman's livery again. The suit of fustian was put under the seat of the dog-cart.

Neither of them had thought of seeing whether the plate-layer's hut which stood on the side of the line was occupied, nor did they notice as they drove away that someone came out of it and walked towards the station.

By this time the fireman had gone forward to Swatton. Messages had flashed backwards and forwards between station and station. No, there was no block upon the line anywhere, and as for the platelayer, the station-master knew nothing of him. The fireman went grumbling back to his engine, the train proceeded on its way.

'Enery, to the station-master's annoyance was nowhere to be found, or it would have been interesting to see the effect the story of the robbery would have produced upon his stolid countenance.

The local train was about to start—Rivers the guard was not on duty that night—as a dapper little man booked to Titherton. He had black eyes which twinkled with intelligence. He laughed softly to himself during the journey.

On his arrival he drove to Titherton police station. In a quarter of an hour he was seated beside the driver on the box-seat of a waggonette. Four police officers rode inside. They drew up within a few hundred yards of Mr. Oram's residence. The little man leading the way, up to the front door they marched. When the parlourmaid saw who the visitors were she tried to close the door upon them. But it was too late.

They locked the women up for safety in one of the rooms. Then they sat down and waited. They heard the wheels of Mr. Oram's trap as he drove up to the house. They heard them stabling the horse, the key clicked in the latch and they pounced upon them as they entered.

"Good evening, Marsh," said the little man.

Mr. Marsh was too much of a philosopher to show any surprise.

"Oh, it's you is it?" said he, "well, you've treed me this time. How on earth did you manage it?"

"Well," said the detective with a grin, "you were very generous to me the other night, so I don't mind telling you. One good turn deserves another. You remember our young friend 'Enery?—now you're not going to make a fuss."

Marsh looked him up and down.

"Not I, my boy," he said, "I admit you've been one too many for us."

Mr. Marsh's visit to these shores had not passed unnoticed by the Scotland Yard authorities. Detective Inspector Linklater—otherwise our friend 'Enery—was deputed to keep an eye on him. It was he who had been lurking in the shrubbery at Woodcotes. He had overheard the plot and had secreted himself in the platelayer's cabin. To have attempted to arrest them single-handed would have meant the escape of one or both of them. So he bided his time.

'Enery's mysterious disappearance was a nine days' wonder at the Junction. Then they forgot him.

W. L. Lillingston.

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THORLINDA.

THE morning wind blew freshly up the fiord along the hillside, fluttering the red kirtles of two chieftains who stood there, and ruffling the white swans' wings that decked their helmets.

As the cloaks of the warriors streamed backward, the April sunlight sparkled gaily among the rings of their mail coats and flashed upon the silver pommels of their swords, while, whenever they turned or moved, the broad blade of the war-axe each carried on his shoulder shot back the arrows of the sun.

The two were brothers—Thorolf and Gudmund—both tall men and good to look upon, but Thorolf, the elder, was ruddy, and broad, and fair, while Gudmund was of slender build. His eyes, too, were dark. His neck and forehead were shaded beneath his helmet by waves of blue black hair.

On the beach before them, the brown armed seamen had pushed their ship out into deep water.

Her prow only still muzzled in the sand and held her steady against the shoreward wind and the lap of the harbour waves.

Her crew had stowed the last barrels of beef and casks of mead for the voyage, and now one by one they clambered in over the bow, and seating themselves at the thwarts, each hung his leather-covered shield outside the gunwale.

Then they tossed the long ashen oars blade upward and dropped them between the tholepins, the flat blades slapping the water as they fell.

After fastening the leather thongs that held the oars in place against the wash of a head sea the men sat silent, fingering their oar butts, waiting for the chiefs to come aboard.

Folk had gathered on the hill to watch the vessel sail. In front of the little group stood a viking's daughter, very fair and taller by a head than the wives of the fishermen and villagers.

She was Thorlinda, cousin to Thorolf and Gudmund, and she was the beloved of Thorolf. Wonderfully beautiful she looked as the wind blew back the linen drapery across her breast and limbs and rippled the wreaths of red gold hair about the fullness of her throat.

Thorolf stood near her, talking little, but with his eyes upon her face, smiling ever at the words she spoke, though the smile was a sad one and passed as quickly as it came.

Gudmund spoke no word nor smiled, but stood as one who wishes to be gone, his dark eyes gazing beyond the fiord mouth to where a glimpse of the ocean glimmered grayly through the fast clearing haze. The helmsman called that all was ready.

Thorolf turned and took Thorlinda in his arms. Gudmund still gazed seaward, and none saw that just when the lovers' lips met his right hand tightened about the axe hilt until his fingers grew white and bloodless, while a wildness gleamed from his helmet shaded eyes. Yet when Thorolf put aside the maiden's arms and leaped with a rattle of war-gear to the beach, Gudmund turned to her a quiet face, met her smile a moment, looked down, and silently followed his brother.

As the chieftains strode to the stern the rowers backed water with a swirl of foam and a shout. Then the helmsman threw his weight against the steering oar, the bow swung round, the carved dragon head at the bows seemed to stretch its neck seaward, snuffing for the broad sweep of the ocean, and to the measured roll and chant of an oar sung the ship glided down the fiord.

Yet as she nodded lightly to the harbour chop Gudmund staggered where he stood and pressed his hands to his face. Then he went forward, ran out an oar and swung steadily with the beat of the rowers.

Thorolf stood thoughtful, gazing above the shimmer of the wake to where a figure fluttered white upon the hillside, and something of triumph, almost a smile, was in his look, for her kiss still lay hot between his lips.

Presently he turned and looked forward and saw where his brother's mail coat gleamed among the blue jerkins of the seamen. Yet his face he did not see, for Gudmund's dark hair was blown about his cheeks and forehead as he swung to and fro. Thorolf watched the

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sweep of his brother's oar blade as it lashed through the water.

"Ah, Gudmund," said he, "you part lightly, and your heart goes out before you to new lands. For me, I feel as though my heart were left behind with Thorlinda, yet my bosom is no lighter for its loss."

"Aye," said the helmsman as he watched the white water swirl after, "he pulls a stronger oar than many, and it is but a little while that we thought him a stripling. Youth and a light heart carry the ship against a head gale when age and sorrow drive under torn canvas."

Thorolf sighed, and turned again to look at the green hillside, the white figure and the dark fir trees beyond, but some of the rowers heard through the rumble of their oars the sob that burst its way between Gudmund's lips.

To those watching from shore the ship was lessening fast, and the oarsmen's song faded into the lapping of water along the beach.

Now she had passed the headland, and they saw her rise and fall with the long heave of the open sea. Now the wet oars flashed in the sun as the rowers tossed them inboard, and running forward loosed the great square sail that bellied from the yard.

Twice the canvas flapped, then, sheeted home, it stood taut and full, while the good ship, heeling beneath it, plowed steadily southward.

The haze had cleared before the fresh sea wind, and the ocean lay blue and sparkling in the sunlight. Thorlinda stood alone, her grave eyes watching the gleam of the sail until it sank from sight, and the empty, peaceful ocean gave no sign of the storm which was to drive that keel far into unknown waters.

* * * * *

Noon lay heavy over a southern land—a land shady with groves of palm and fruit trees, scented with thick odours, washed about its shores by a cloudless sea.

Upon a dazzling stretch of sand Gudmund sat silent, looking out across the ocean—an ocean such as he had never known in his northern home, for its waters were of a deep and glowing purple, like the light upon mountain peaks at sunset, and in place of the thunder crash of a Norwegian surf low ripples curled murmurously along the shore.

Gudmund was no longer a youth. His face was older and thinner than on that day when they had left the fiord.

He sat now with his chin upon his hand slowly tracing with the tip of his scabbard a woman's face upon the sand.

Throughout his boyhood he had looked up to his brother as braver and stronger than himself, as always doing the deeds he merely longed to do. Yet now, sunk in the languor of this new land, Thorolf had still delayed sailing, and the vikings' ship lay on the beach like a stranded sea monster, her planks gaping open in the fierce sun.

To Gudmund, gazing seaward with empty eyes, there arose a dream of his own northland. The fiord glimmered grey between black walls of rock; the snowy land lay white and silent in the winter twilight, darkened with long violet shadows upon the eastward hills. Here and there a breath of smoke rose skyward from some half-buried grange.

Again he saw their father's hall—the hearth with great logs roaring in red flame, the long tables where house carles laughed and clattered the mead horns, and high up on the dais the ruddy face and beard of the old viking crowning the feast, Thorlinda at his side.

While he mused his brother came from among the shades of the thicket seeking him and threw an arm in kindly way about his shoulders.

"Why, Gudmund, were the dark girls shy, or are you unkind to them?" he asked.

"I dreamed of home," said the younger dully. "How soon do we sail?"

Thorolf pushed him roughly away. "That's again! You are an ungrateful fool who would wander from a good land to a worse. Yet, take the men and go. I shall stay."

"How shall I greet the home folk from you, an honourless man, and your troth to Thorlinda?"

Thorolf scowled, and his hand flew to his swordless side. Nothing rouses the wild beast so quickly in the mind of a weak man as when another steps in to help his better angel in the losing fight.

Anger flamed hot in Thorolf's face as he sprang forward, but Gudmund's sword flashed bare, and for the first time the elder man gave back and shrank from leaping with clenched hands against a levelled blade. His glance, which had ever been steady and as keen as steel when swords were drawn, changed to a heavy look, and he lowered his eyes before the scorn of his brother's gaze. Then as the brute within him rose in final triumph over his better self he turned away with a laugh.

"Go to the cold northern land. Go yourself and shiver between Thorlinda's arms," he cried out and strode back into the musky shade.

* * * * *

Once again the long dragon ship lay ready to sail.

Of her crew some had been lost at sea, some had died, and some had wandered away with savage maidens far into the inland valleys. Yet still a remnant was eager to follow Gudmund homeward.

They were rich with the gold of that land. They could buy fields and farms in their own country and pass their old age in peace.

For five days they had been working hard—Gudmund hardest of all—caulking the seams of the old warship, filling the water casks and victualling her with sun-dried fish and fruit and such meat as they could get.

Thorolf, with his dark wife, had kept apart.

Once the grey helmsman had talked with Gudmund, proposing that they should bind his brother in sleep and carry him aboard, since it was a shame that a hero should thus be lost, and if they left him the black people would surely kill him when alone among them.

Gudmund struggled with the thought. A wild and anxious hope had filled his mind. Against this his duty to Thorolf rose clear and strong. Yet after all why should he drag his brother from his happiness? Surely he could not love Thorlinda, nor would she love him if she knew. And he lifted his head and answered, "My brother has chosen his own way."

Now all things about the ship were ready for sailing. The crew pushed her out through the low wash of the sea, and clambering over the sides settled themselves at their thwarts. Even as they did so Thorolf came through the thicket and walked slowly down the beach. The men lay on their oars watching him. Seeing that they paused, he, too, stood still, and with his heel crushed a delicate seashell into the sand.

"Pull, men!" said Gudmund and covered his eyes with his hand.

The oars rumbled in the rowlocks, but with the first stroke Thorolf threw his arms above his head, strode forward and shouted:

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"Stop!"

As he ran down the beach a dark-skinned girl burst wildly from the thicket, shrieked and plunged back into the shade, then leaped forth again, grasping a bow, with a brightly feathered arrow drawn to the head. The seamen stood upright and shouted. Gudmund waved his arms, and Thorolf paused and turned, only to see his death, for at that moment the arrow whistled and sank deep into his side.

As he fell, Gudmund leaped into the water and a moment after knelt beside him. The dying man frowned fixedly at him.

Thorolf's right hand had gripped the arrow just above the wound and broken it short.

The blood dripped steadily between his fingers, blackening the white sand. Thus the two gazed at each other, nor could all the strength of natural grief keep back from Gudmund's eyes a sparkle of hope and joy. Thorolf's mouth twitched. His shuddering breath broke into a great sob that sent a blood gush from the wound.

"You have Thorlinda. I hate you!" he moaned, then turned upon his face, gasped once and never stirred again.

* * * * *

A black autumn afternoon gloomed above the fiord. The ocean shivered, gray and white, beneath a cold, wet wind that drove the spray far inland and tore the yellow leaves from bush and tree.

Folk had gathered on the hillside, for from the headland the stormbound fishermen had sighted a tall dragon ship driving in before the gale, and there were many in the neighbourhood whose kinsmen had sailed in such a ship with the two brothers more than four years ago.

Now the watchers could see her plainly, rolling and weltering in the angry seaway, the spray breaking in sheets above her. Storm-battered she looked, and her crew were few, yet they raised a shout as she lurched past the headland and staggered up the fiord.

And now they let the sail go with a run. Now with a rush and surge of water about her prow the ship took ground at the beach, and the seamen leaped over her bows, waist deep, to be kissed and thronged about by old sweethearts and friends.

Gudmund stood still at the tiller, haggard and bearded, girt with a rough fur cloak, his hair and forehead grey with the brine which had dried upon them. He staggered as he walked forward, and dropped heavily to the beach, his eyes fixed upon Thorlinda.

Far out at the fiord mouth he had seen her tall white figure, and his gaze had never left it. Through all the voyage the thought of her had been before him, dimming the memory of his brother.

Had he acted for the best or had he been false to both? He hardly knew. If Thorolf had been true to her, would he still, as of old, have fought down the passionate love in his own heart? What did it matter now if once he held her in his arms?

He had rowed with the strength of any two, and when his men were spent with labour and ceaseless bailing it was he who held the tiller when they slept. It was he who had kept the watch at night, with steady eyes upon the northern stars.

He went towards her, slow and weak, asking silently for a glance, a word, but she looked beyond him to the empty ship and to the seamen.

At length she turned to him and gave her hand, asking quietly, though the words shook:

"Was it in battle he died, or did Aegir, the Wave god, take him?"

Then he began, looking downward, and told her as best he could, but he did not know what words he said, for he could not hear the sound of his own voice, and he swayed slightly where he stood. Yet, still speaking, he noticed as in a dream how sear and yellow the grass had grown and how closely the sheep had cropped it. A short cry broke from his dream. He looked up and stood rigid, for under her red gold hair her blue eyes blazed, and in their angry look he saw again his brother's dying face.

Then she spoke. From her full breast and throat the words came deep and low:

"Cousin," she said, "not without fame you have come home, and you shall indeed live long in the memory of men, for you are the first of the house of Egil to have earned the name of coward and traitor."

Dreaming still, he turned and walked towards the sea. The long sigh of the waves, the hurry of the autumn wind, heavy with rain and mist, all blended with his dream. For a moment the storm-wrack cleared to westward, and a yellow glare came over the sky as the setting sun shone on the black rocks and green water and restless ridges of foam. Gudmund stood while the last glow lay warm upon his eyes and matted hair.

Then as the clouds rolled up again he sank down, unclasped the sword belt and threw open his cloak of fur, the rain beating against his breast and forehead. His head dropped lower, and with the point of his scabbard he slowly traced a woman's face upon the sands, while still the raindrops blurred the lines. Darkness came over the fiord; the early evening gloomed and deepened into night.

Next morning when some fishers passed that way, they paused and marvelled greatly that so strong a man should lie there dead with never a wound in his body.

N. Y. T.

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The Brain Gymnasium

IN these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, SHORT STORIES, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by first post on Monday, June 18th, 1900.

No. 136.

TRANSFORM BLACK into WHITE in eight moves, changing one letter at a time, each move to make a dictionary word.

No. 137.

FROM the letters of the words "Almost a toad," form the name of a dainty dish.

No. 138.

THE following signifies a well-known proverb. What is it?

WE IS DO

No. 139.

FORM a square word with words signifying:

"TO SQUANDER," "A PLAYER," "A MINERAL CONCRETION," "A PICK-ME-UP," "UPRIGHT."

No. 140.

ONE-THIRD of grape, plus one-fourth of wave, plus two-fifths of handy, plus one-fourth of rage, plus one-fourth of elephant, plus one-fifth of fight, plus one-third of undone.

The sum will give the name of a well-known poem.

No. 141.

SUPPLY the blanks in the following sentences with words all spelt with the same letters:

If you want to find the cottage of your _____ father, you must go through that _____. You will find the _____ ground _____ than it is here.

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Nos. 112 to 117.

THE prize of £2 has been awarded this week to Mr. W. Tapley, of 10 Gregory Street, Loughborough, whose solution was the first correct one dealt with.

Each of the following have been awarded a copy of "The Raid of the Detrimental," by the Earl of Desart:

Richard Unwin, 10 Windermere Street, Liverpool.
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Miss Edith Bassnett, 1 Thomas Street, Butts, Coventry.
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Sydney Curzons, 2 Lockton Street, North Kensington, W.
F. Smith, 77 Elm Grove, Brighton.
Mrs. Bourne, 72 Meadow Road, South Lambeth, S.W.
A. Cottrell, 120A Bristol Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham.
A. E. Dayley, 61 William Edward Street, Birmingham.
James M. Wood, Heath Vale, Hatherley Road, Sidcup.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES.

Nos. 118 to 123.

No. 118. When one is taken away. XIX., XX.

No. 119.

9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	-	45.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	-	45.
8	6	4	1	9	7	5	3	2	-	45

No. 120. Fifty-nine seconds.

No. 121.

R E S T
E V E R
S E R E
T R E E

No. 122. 58.

No. 123. Shire, Rogue, Emotion, Rage, Enwheel, Height, Tree.

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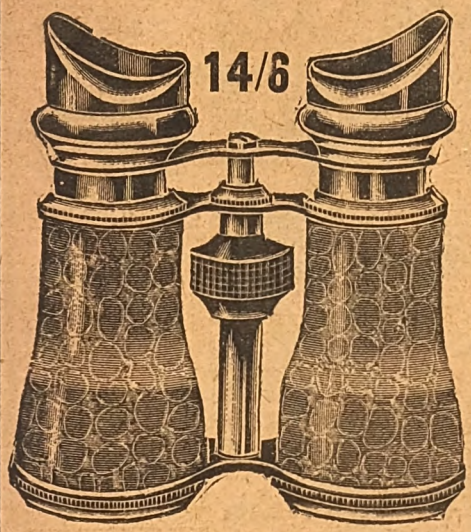

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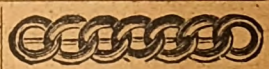

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SHORT STORIES

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN

No. 598. FOR WEEK ENDING JUNE 16TH, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

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SHORT STORIES.

No. 598.] [PRICE ONE PENNY.

For the Week Ending June 16th, 1900.

A Game of Consequences.

"ARE you quite sure there's no one to meet me? No carriage or anything?"

"Certain, Miss. None of the castle people have been down to-day."

"But it is impossible, they expected me—they——" the girl broke off silenced by the look of curiosity in the station-master's eyes. If Lady Arabella were so ill-bred as to ignore a guest in this fashion, matters would not be improved by making it public.

"Is there any conveyance I could hire?"

"I might get Jacob Towers to lend his cart for a bit."

"Oh, no, I'd rather walk."

"It's a matter of three miles to the castle, and it looks like snow. Still, you know best, Miss."

The girl looked distressed. What could she do? It would be too terrible to arrive at her Aunt's in a cart, but the idea of tramping through the snow was even less attractive. Was ever girl in such a plight?

The station master had apparently come to the end of his suggestions. Moreover, there seemed nothing else to suggest.

"I shall walk," she answered, and with a flush on her pretty cheeks and a sparkle in her eyes that boded ill for Lady Arabella, Nora Carleon set out at a good round pace.

A short distance down the lane, the sound of wheels attracted her attention. A minute later and a high dogcart dashed into sight.

The young fellow who was driving pulled up smartly by her side.

"I'm afraid I've kept you waiting," he said pleasantly, "do you think you can manage to get up? I daren't leave the mare to her own devices, she's terribly skittish to-day."

This was hardly the sort of equipage one would have expected Lady Arabella to own. There was an air of rakishness about the whole turnout, from the big raw-boned chesnut to the good-looking devil-may-care driver, that was totally at variance with Nora's preconceived notions of her aunt. Besides who could the young man be?

A guest, she decided, as she mounted, not without difficulty, to the seat by his side.

"We'll send down for your traps later on," he said, "the girls will lend you some of their finery this evening. By the bye," he added, "I can't say much for Len's powers of description. He led me to suppose you

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Nora Carleon set out at a good round pace.

were something very different. Anyway," with a smile which revealed a set of white teeth, "we're awfully glad to have you. The girls are mad to see you."

Nora felt more puzzled every moment. Lady Arabella's daughters were, if possible, even more stiff and starched than their mother. As to their being "mad" about anything, the idea was too humourous. And who, she wondered, was "Len"? She laughed and tried to turn the conversation.

"Are they all well?" she asked.

"Fit as a fiddle, and quite determined that your visit shall be a success. I can't tell you how good I think it was of you to take pity on us. It's such a change to come from town to a benighted spot like this. I hope you won't find it too dull."

Evidently this charming young fellow did not know the reason for her visit to the Castle. She suddenly felt more reconciled to the prospect of "a three months' stay."

"I expect Len will be very mad at having missed you," he went on, "but the fact is, I couldn't resist the temptation to come myself. Len takes such a time to adorn himself—you know his ways—so I sneaked downstairs while he was dressing and jumped in the cart.

"By-the-bye, did you have much trouble to get out of your engagement?"

So the horrid boy did know after all.

"Terrible," she said clasping her hands. "I never went through such a time. But don't speak of it. I'm sick to death of the whole thing. I want a little peace."

"I always understood he was a very decent sort of fellow. At least Len gave us that idea."

"Possibly his title, not to mention his money, atones for a lot of sins in most people's eyes. But in my mind I never met so odious or so vulgar a man, never."

The young man glanced at her in astonishment.

"Have you cut the concern altogether?" he asked.

"I don't know what right you have to ask me," she returned indignantly, "but if you mean have I broken my engagement definitely, I have."

"But what on earth are you going to do?"

"Wait here till I hear from India. My brother's quartered out there, you know."

"Good gracious. Well, of course, I, that is we, shall be delighted for you to stay as long as possible. Only I'm afraid you'll find it rather dull. I hope," he added, in a livelier manner, "you'll be satisfied with the arrangements we've made about the show."

"The show?"

"Oh hang it—I thought that you'd understand. Surely that duffer Len explained. It's a sort of comic opera business—just your line.—You've got a ripping part. Len's collared the next best, and I come in a sort of third. The girls hover about generally."

What on earth had come to Lady Arabella, Nora wondered, the utmost in the way of entertainment that lady sanctioned being "A happy evening for the poor."

"That's awfully jolly," said the girl. "I love theatricals."

Her companion glanced at her once more in the odd fashion that seemed peculiarly his own.

"Here we are," he said, skilfully turning into a long drive, which led to a large untidy looking house.

Shouts greeted their arrival. A group of young people rushed on to the steps, a couple of dogs barked frantically, and got in the way of a tall fair man who was gazing intently at Nora.

In a minute, she was surrounded, one took her muff, another seized upon her coat; finally, laughing and protesting she was borne off to a cosy room furnished in a heterogeneous but delightful manner, suggestive alike of boudoir and smoking room.

"We were so afraid you wouldn't come," said a tall dark girl, "it's too good of you not to disappoint us."

"Yes," chorused a number of feminine voices, "too good."

"And you mustn't mind our saying so, but you're even prettier than we hoped."

"Yes, isn't she a dear."

Nora wondered if by chance she had strayed into the county asylum. Any notion that she was at the Castle being utterly dispelled by the last remark. "Prettier than they hoped!" What nice girls they were. Even if they were lunatics she liked them.

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All the same it was very perplexing, and the longer she stayed the more difficult it was to explain. How should she solve the difficulty?

Her attention was distracted by the sound of voices in the hall.

"Fair? My dear boy, you're a perfect ass. She's a brunette, as dainty a little beauty—"

"Little," sneered the other, "five foot seven if she's an inch."

"Your grandmother!"

"Come and see for yourself, then!"

"See? As if I didn't know. Just fancy my not knowing Peggy Lovell."

"Yes, but——"

"My dear Fairleigh, don't be ridiculous. Peggy——" he turned into the room, and advanced with outstretched hands.

"By Jove!" he said, "it isn't Peggy after all."

Nora started. She had suddenly found the key to the enigma. Peggy Lovell was a burlesque actress, whom these people—delightful people, she called them—had asked down to help them with some theatricals. Why? Oh why was she not a burlesque actress? Why, oh why was she condemned to stay at the Castle with a set of frumps—so she designated Lady Arabella and her daughters.

A sudden thought—daring as delightful—flashed through her brain.

"No," she said sweetly, "I'm not Peggy—but perhaps I'll do instead."

For a moment there was a blank. Then everyone spoke at the same time.

"Delighted, only too pleased. After all, Peggy was a little, just a little short, for a boy's part."

"Of course," asked Len critically, "you can sing?"

A nod from Nora.

"Dance?"

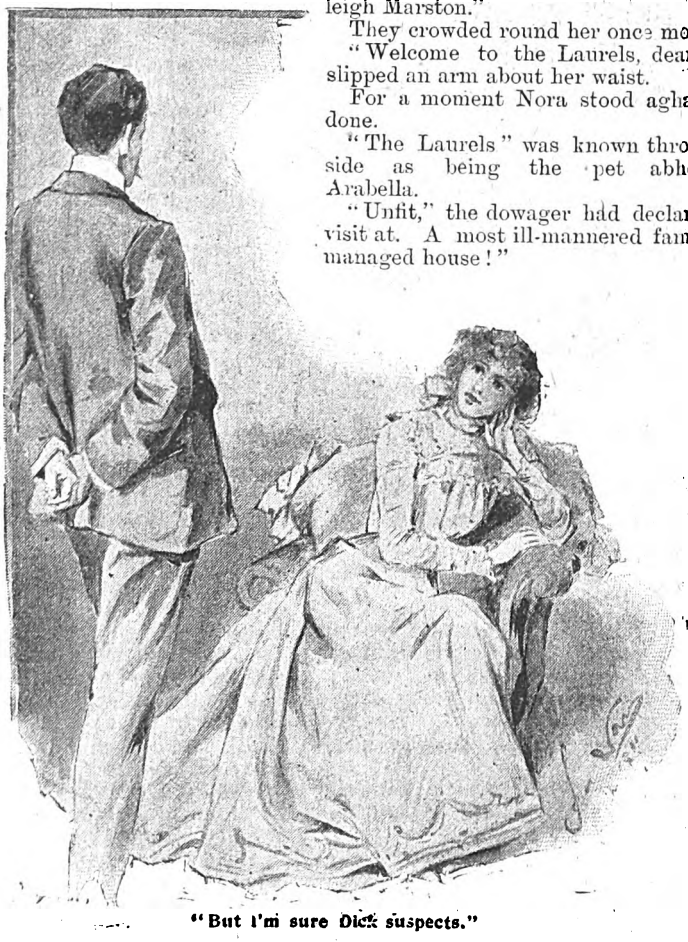
"What do you think?"

"Mere matter of form," muttered Len, while Fairleigh glared at him from the background.

"You must be tired, Miss ——?" he paused and looked enquiringly.

Nora flushed, and bit her lip.

Somehow she could not give a false name even in a jest. These people were so kind, it would be such a mean return. After all, she was her own mistress; now that she had broken with Lord Brewster and quarrelled with his family. She had in fact left his sister, who was chaperoning her, at a moment's notice. She was responsible to no one.



"But I'm sure Dick suspects."

"I am Nora Laurie," she said, simply, giving her two Christian names only.

Fairleigh took her by the hand. "Then, Miss Laurie, let me present the family. "My sisters," pointing to the four pretty girls who had seized on her. "My cousin, Lord Staplethorpe," with a nod in the direction of the tall fair man she had seen on the steps, "my elder brother Len, and last your humble servant Fairleigh Marston."

They crowded round her once more with kind words.

"Welcome to the Laurels, dear," said Alice, and slipped an arm about her waist.

For a moment Nora stood aghast at what she had done.

"The Laurels" was known throughout the country side as being the pet abhorrence of Lady Arabella.

"Unfit," the dowager had declared, "for any girl to visit at. A most ill-mannered family, and a most ill-managed house!"

Looking up—still with a trace of dismay on her face—Nora met Fairleigh's eyes.

It seemed to her she read a challenge in his face.

Turning she asked the girls to take her to her room. She suddenly and inexplicably felt cold and tired—and disappointed.

* * *

"Tell you what it is, old chap," said Lord Staplethorpe to Len. "I'm no end puzzled about her,"—with a nod in Nora's direction. "I've seen her—more than once too—somewhere in town. But where, that's the puzzle."

"Don't try to be funny, Dick," said Len, "where should you see her but on the stage?"

"That's just were it wasn't," replied Dick, triumphantly.

"Stage door then?" suggested Len.

"No, no, old chap, nothing of the kind. I say," glancing towards Fairleigh who was in attendance upon Nora, "doesn't it strike you that the boy is rather gone in that quarter?"

"The boy, as you call him, is twenty-five, Dick."

"All the worse for him—the attack will be the more severe."

"Aren't you afraid of being cut out?"

Dick laughed and glanced at Alice.

"Not much, old chap," he said, and something in his manner made Len Marston open his eyes.

Positively he was in love with Alice! Well, she was a dear girl and Staplethorpe was an excellent match. And the head of the house of Marston felt at peace with

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"Oh, Nora, what diamonds! Are they real?"

himself and all the world. Meanwhile, the rehearsals went on apace. Nora made a bewitching boy, and, so everyone declared, beat Peggy Lovell hollow.

Nothing had been heard of that fascinating damsel save a brief wire to the effect that she was "laid up," while so far as Nora was concerned Lady Arabella might never have existed.

"All the same," murmured Dick, watching carefully, "she's not used to it. Hasn't the tricks of the stage, doubt if she's ever been on one."

Fairleigh and Nora both heard the remark. The one flushed to her temples, the other stared stolidly at her and then on the ground.

"Well," cried Nora sharply, "are you dissatisfied? Would you like me to throw up the part? I've no wish to continue it, in fact if you like I'll go back to town to-night."

Fairleigh made no answer but stood moodily a long way off.

"Do you believe what he says?"

"Yes."

"Then, then you think I'm—what do you think I am?" she asked superbly.

"An extremely pretty girl," he returned imperturbably.

"That's an evasion. Why do you suppose I came here?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

As he grew colder she waxed more indignant.

"I will not remain here to be insulted. I will leave this evening. I will go—"

"Where?" he asked quietly. "You forget that you said you must stay here till you heard from your brother in India." There was a scornful inflection in his voice that did not escape her.

She turned pale and for a moment was silenced.

"If," he went on slowly, "you don't want to tell me your story, why it is your business, and I have no right to force your confidence. But I should like to help you."

She murmured some incoherent words, begging, it seemed to him, for silence on his part.

"You need not fear," he said. "I shan't give you away. But," he came nearer and spoke in a low almost impressive sort of voice, "I am sure Dick suspects."

"He won't——"

"No, of course not. Dick's a gentleman. I wish," he went on earnestly, "that you would let me give you my assistance. You're so young, so pretty, it's such a pity, such a dreadful pity."

"What?" she asked.

He flashed a look of scorn.

"Oh, don't make matters worse," he cried passionately. "If you won't own up at any rate don't pretend. At all events to me."

She leant back in her chair, and for a moment she seemed to go round.

Had she done anything so very terrible? The Marstons were a happy-go-lucky family with a delightful freedom from conventionality, at most she had expected to be laughed at when she announced who and what she was.

But Fairleigh seemed to think it horribly deceitful. Perhaps it was wrong not to let her aunt know her whereabouts.

But then her liberty would end. Once let Lady Arabella discover that her niece was at the Laurels and all the dogs in Christendom—let alone Len's—wouldn't keep the intrepid dowager from storming the house.

"Won't you let me help you?" he asked once more. "I feel sure you were overpersuaded. Of your own will you could never have done such a thing. There's still time to put things straight. Dick has some influence, and Len and I are not without friends. Only trust in me, confide in me and all will be well. I beg you, I implore you, don't reject my assistance."

"I don't understand you," she said stiffly. "It seems to me you are making a great fuss over nothing."

He turned away stifling it seemed to Nora, rather a strong expletive.

"As you will," he said, "I have offered my help. You decline. I am powerless without your co-operation."

He stalked off the temporary stage with all the sulkiness if not the effect of a discarded suitor.

Nora left to herself was in two minds whether to laugh or cry. The first finally gained the day. She shook with merriment, what could he mean?

Suddenly an explanation suggested itself. He had heard of her engagement to Lord Brewster, and was urging her to make it up with that nobleman.

"Mercenary—like the rest," she thought bitterly, "can't understand a girl caring for anything but gold or title."

The family noticed with surprise that if Fairleigh were unusually silent Nora was particularly snappish, at any rate to their younger brother.

"I thought she was fond of him," said Alice sadly.

"Which," remarked Dick sapiently, "shows how little you know of your own sex. Now I"—but here he kissed her.

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The evening of what Fairleigh termed "the show" had arrived. The "County"—who with the exception of the folk at the castle regarded the Marstons with good humoured toleration largely tinctured with cordiality was well represented.

It was even rumoured that Lady Arabella herself had decided to bury the hatchet and show those "poor Marston girls that I am truly sorry for them."

The explanation of this demonstration of friendliness was, so Len declared, due to the presence of Lord Staplethorpe.

"She wants to catch you for Blanche, old chap," he murmured squinting through the curtain. "However there's still time for you to escape. She's not here yet."

Meantime Nora was dressing for her part. She was as Alice said "quite the most charming boy imaginable." Dressed in white satin covered with jewels, a laced hat on her golden curls, she was to be forgiven if she felt a thrill of admiration for her own dainty figure.

"Oh, Nora, what diamonds!" said Nancy Marston. "Are they real?"

"Of course," said Nora, fingering the necklace.

"You're never going to wear that?" said Fairleigh as Nancy flitted away. "Are you quite mad?"

"Don't you think it suitable?" she said, puzzled. "You know one is allowed a lot of latitude in burlesque."

"Don't," he said and took her almost roughly by the wrist.

"Look," pointing between the curtains.

"Well, what is it?"

"There in the front row, don't you see?"

"Good gracious, it's Lady Arabella and her daughters. Oh, Fairleigh, what shall I do?"

"They are of very little consequence. Look further on, there to the right. Now do you understand?"

His eyes rested on a pale delicate-looking man of middle height, with the querulous look of ill health on his face.

"Oh," with a little gasp, "it's Lord Brewster."

"Do you know who's sitting next to him—the chap with the fair beard?"

She shook her head, awed in spite of herself by his tone.

"A detective from Scotland Yard, sent to trace the diamonds stolen from Lady Jardine's (Lord Brewster's sister) a month ago. Now do you ask me what I mean? Now will you wear this cursed thing?"

He tore the necklace from her throat. Then suddenly clasped her in his arms, kissing her lips, her eyes, her hair with eager passionate haste.

"My love, my darling," he whispered, "why don't you trust me, why won't you believe I want to help you. Only tell me the truth and no one shall touch you."

"You mean——"

"I mean that I love you, that come what may I want you to be my wife."

"Oh, not that," she cried, "what do you mean by the truth?"

He put her from him and once again the look of scorn gathered in his eyes.

"The truth about the diamonds, the diamonds that you stole."

Another second he had left her.

* * * * *

A bell rang, hurriedly the stage was cleared She found herself white and trembling waiting to go on.

At the close of the performance the two last named gentlemen made their way to the stage. The curtain was up and many of the audience had crowded round the actors offering their congratulations. Presently Nora felt a touch on her arm. Fairleigh was eyeing her with a white set face and pleading eyes.

"Come," he whispered, "there's still time."

But as he spoke the detective stopped before them.

"Now," said the man in brown, "the game's up, my girl. Hand me the jewels and come quietly."

"Do you know who I am?" she asked calmly.

"Yes," was the reply, "you're Jessie Mills, maid to Miss Carleon, whose diamonds you're wearing."

"You are mistaken," she spoke in a high, clear voice. Everyone turned and listened.

"I am Nora Carleon herself—that lady—" pointing to Lady Arabella, "will identify me as her niece."

And even so the unhappy woman was compelled to acknowledge herself the aunt of a girl in tights!

* * * * *

Nora's folly might have had worse results.

Her sudden disappearance had been put down, by her friends, to a fit of temper, from which, it was argued, she would re-appear smiling and cheerful.

In the meantime, Mills, her maid, was believed to have levanted with the jewels, which led to Nora's attempted arrest as that person.

"We have all been at cross purposes," she told Fairleigh, "since the day when I spoke of Lord Brewster, and you thought I was alluding to a theatrical manager."

"Can you ever forgive me, darling, for my wicked suspicions?" he asked.

"Oh, that was nothing," she returned, with a shy look in her beautiful eyes, "although you thought I was a—a thief you loved me!"

And so her game of consequence ended in a happy marriage; so happy were they, that they never even wondered what the world said!

"Can you ever forgive me?" he asked.

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GIVEN UP.

THEY were strolling along the beach of a Yorkshire watering-place, watching the white-sailed boats make towards the shore, for out seaward the sky was growing black and threatening.

A quiet happiness rested on her face, impatience on his. She did not perceive it; the incoming sea claimed all her attention.

"Confoundedly dull here! Always the same old story!" he grumbled, grimly; and, shivering, he buttoned up his coat.

She turned and looked with surprise at her neighbour's discontented face.

"Yes," he repeated aloud, "the sea is always singing the same old story, and you have been repeating it for the last seven long years; I'm an idiot to listen to it."

She nodded smilingly.

"The emancipation of women is very fine in theory," he continued, crossly. "I myself have broken many a lance for it before now——"

"You have?" she answered him mockingly. "My brave knight, 'have' is the cradle-song with which grown-up children gladly sing themselves to sleep."

"That thrust does not touch me," he replied calmly. "My narcotic is work—work which brings blessings; but I ask you, what blessing has women's emancipation ever brought me?"

"The greatest in the world, for it has preserved you from domestic grievances."

"Oh, of course, you will overwhelm me with sarcasm. No; since I have seen to what this emancipation leads——"

"Well, to what, then?" she interrupted, quite undisturbed. "Not down into the depths, but into the broad highway of the world."

"That's just it," he said eagerly. "That's why marriage gets rarer every day, and bachelors and old maids increase in like proportion."

"I suspect," she replied with a fine smile, "that the old bachelors are unhappier than the old maids; we are more self-reliant and more careful."

"More self-reliant and more careful!" he burst forth, coming to an abrupt stand-still.

"Yes, much more self-reliant," she repeated, with a mischievous smile. "A man attends very well to the business or profession to which he has devoted years of study and practice——"

"How considerate of you, to admit even so much!" he broke in, with a laugh which betrayed as much annoyance as amusement.

"He may show himself decided and determined enough where his accustomed work is concerned," she went on, regardless of the interruption; "but, outside of that, especially in the ordinary details of life, man is usually a very helpless animal."

"How fortunate that nature has given the poor creature the support of women!" quoth he, sarcastically.

"It is indeed," she answered, with perfect gravity.

"Well, then," cried he, ready-witted enough to try and turn her admission to his own advantage, "that being the case, I wonder you are not willing to be a little more kindly-disposed towards me."

"My dear friend," she rejoined, with a ringing laugh, "I am only a woman it is true; but I am logician enough to know that nothing can be weaker and more inadmissible than to attempt to apply a general assertion to a particular case."

"You certainly are the most provoking woman alive!" cried he, frowning, but forced in spite of himself to echo her good-naturedly mocking laughter.

"It is getting too windy to stand here and listen to the catalogue of my defects; for you are apt to be discursive when you get on the subject," said she, with perfect good-humour, moving on as she spoke.

He walked beside her in silence until they reached a turn of the shore, where, in front and to the left, a long promontory jutted out, forming a little haven.

The waters were quiet there; some boats were visible in the distance; the bald, bleak sweep of low hills stood out beyond, half in sunlight, half in shadow, and near the beach was the wreck of an old barque that had lain there for several seasons, adding to the desolateness of the scene.

"What a gloomy spot this is! And you always seem to fancy it," he exclaimed, abruptly, with perhaps a faint echo of peevishness in his voice.

"That is because I am not gloomy," she answered with her imperturbable composure, adding in the same careless tone: "Has any special news from South Africa been published by the War Office?"

He only replied by a negative gesture.

"Does that mean there is no news, or that you don't know or care?" she asked teasingly.

"I said a little while ago that you were the most provoking woman in the world!" cried he.

"The repetition is even more energetic and irrelevant than the original remark," she said, in an unaltered voice.

"But you cannot deny that it is true," he retorted.

"I hardly think it is; however, wise men say we never know ourselves," she replied.

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"I believe you try to convince me that you don't own a heart—I wonder you have not already!" he exclaimed impetuously.

She stopped short and confronted him; a slight cloud passed over her face—her frank, honest eyes looked a little stern.

"You have said a good many unpleasant things to-day," she remarked, with a certain thrill of impatience in her tone.

As she spoke, she seated herself on a great piece of timber that had been washed up from some wreck and left lying on the beach. She looked fixedly at him as he stood silent before her, and, as he showed no disposition to speak, she went on:

"You seem annoyed—offended; I don't know that I have done anything to cause it."

"No?" he asked in a tone of doubt.

"No," she replied, firmly. "What is it? What do you want me to say or do?"

"I want you to be my wife!" he cried eagerly.

She shook her head and said slowly, as if repeating some lesson learned by heart:

"I am quite satisfied to receive a letter from you now and then, and in summer to spend four pleasant weeks in your society, and to hear you scold about woman's authorship and woman's emancipation, which make me quite unfitted to be a married woman. Let us meet here again eleven months from to-day. Give me your hand on it. You will not?"

"I'm tired of being your good friend. Next summer I shall go to Italy. I'm sick of going to the same place every year to spend my holiday."

"To Italy?" she laughed. "To Italy, in summer? Perhaps you want to try Roman baths on the spot, for influenza."

"I'm quite determined," he cried, vexed by her laughter. "I declare to you that I will keep my resolution, if you insist on yours."

She started.

"Don't be foolish," she said earnestly. "How could you be sure that you would be happier if I should yield to your wish? As a child, I caught at a brilliant soap bubble; but scarcely had I touched it when it burst, the soap dashed into my eyes and I cried with pain."

"I thought we had grown out of childhood," he replied dryly.

"And for that reason the understanding checks the resolution that would be easy to a child of sixteen."

He seized both her hands and began to speak with tremulous earnestness.

"And is it, then, so hard to give up that wicked pride—to be happy, and to bestow happiness like other mortals?"

She did not reply. She only gazed at the sea, without seeing it. She forgot to withdraw her hand from his, and a scalding tear that had started to her eye at his warm words rolled slowly down her cheek.

He thought he had conquered her proud heart, and was about to fold her in his arms, when she sprang hastily up, and while a bright flush rose to her face, she said with agitation:

"The time is past when such wishes filled my heart. That they did once I will not deny."

She threw back her head and looked at him firmly and frankly.

"Now it is over; I am contented and happy in my way, and I will remain so."

She spoke the last words with powerful energy, as if she feared to arouse a still more powerful opposition.

But she was mistaken.

He bent down, picked up a little stone, and slowly and carefully pounded in a nail which had just caught her dress. Other nails, too, seemed to him to need attention, and he examined and worked at the beam as conscientiously as though he had come out solely for that purpose.

This again was not quite what his companion desired. She began anew, in a lower tone:

"Believe me, my life appears to me like a peaceful haven—marriage like an open sea. I dare not venture out, for fear that I might suffer miserable shipwreck."

The last nail was pounded in. The stone flew out into the sea, and calmly, very calmly, came the reply.

"Why waste so many words? Why do you not tell me your true reasons? You would not be telling me anything new, for I know it. You have no confidence in me."

She met his gloomy, questioning gaze with frank eyes, in which a certain sadness struggled up despite her efforts. She rose, took his arm, and they retraced their steps, walking in silence again until they reached the open beach. Then he suddenly repeated:

"No confidence in me!"

"I had," she said in a low voice, which sounded ominously clear in his ears.

"Seven years have passed since then," he cried despairingly; "seven long years, in which I have tried to make good my offence against you in a moment of mad infatuation. Seven years, and you cannot forget it yet?"

"I cannot."

"You have no heart. Forgive me! I always forget that you are a celebrated authoress, with a whole heap of stored-up newspapers full of your praises. What does such a woman need of a heart that can bestow pardon when it is so earnestly begged for?"

"And yet I have a heart, and it beats as warmly as it did seven years ago; but my trust in men, which was greater than the sea, has all passed away. I must say it for once, so that all may be clear between us. Give it up—once deceived, I can never trust again; and what is a marriage without trust? A boat on the open sea, with neither sail nor rudder. Let us go in, my friend; the sun has set, and the night is coming on."

She went to her lodgings; he remained on the beach. But, the further she went away from him, the lower sank her courage and her ease of mind. And, when she stopped in her walk and listened to the deep murmur of the trees and sea, she felt overwhelmed with a feeling of desolation, as if she were a lost child who could not find the right path.

She sprang up and walked hastily onward, in order to come into the neighbourhood of human beings. He, on the contrary, found the loneliness of the beach congenial. The fresh sea wind cooled his burning brow, and the tossing sea harmonised with the agitation of his perturbed mind. Too long had he patiently waited; too long had he tried to make good that on which he had once failed; too long had he bowed before her will.

He had believed that he could overcome her opposition by his faith and his constancy. He had thought himself at the goal of his wishes—and she had sent him away with smiles, as if he were a presumptuous schoolboy. Anger, shame and love contended in his breast, and he knew not which feeling was the most powerful.

The storm beat against the waves and drove them

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close up to his feet. The wind snatched his hat from his head and raged round the lonely wanderer. But on and on he went, as if it were a pleasure to fight against his unseen adversary with all his physical strength.

What the power of the storm failed to do, the approaching night accomplished. She laid her cool hand on his burning eyes and soothed him, but his foot stumbled; then, at last, he thought of turning about.

He flung into the sea a branch which lay at his feet and, pursued by the wind, hurried back; but, in a few seconds, a powerful wave brought the branch to his feet again. Again he took it up and flung it violently into the waves, as if he could rid himself in this way of his unhappy thoughts. Vain endeavour! A few seconds, and the branch was again at his feet. Then the embittered man, in a burst of rage, flung the bit of wood on to a little sand hill, and like a curse sounded his embittered words:

"May the sun dry you, and the fisherman burn you!"

The storm burst over the land and the wind pursued the retreating man with a cloud of sand, and whirled the poor branch into the sea, to be thrust back to land again the next moment. The moon came fitfully out between the clouds and seemed to smile mockingly at his folly.

"Fool! give it up," he muttered, "give it up!"

Then he turned and walked inland, his back towards the village and the wood—away along a solitary path, with the moon overhead struggling among the clouds, the night wind sighing drearily in his ear, seeming always to echo that sullen resolution to the holding fast whereof he was straining all his energies: "Give it up! give it up!"

The next morning she appeared earlier than usual on the verandah of the hotel. He must pass here; here she would say farewell to him. To separate for eleven long months without saying farewell—that would be impossible. Perhaps she had been too hard. He was quite capable of going away without seeing her again. But no—she had often angered him before, and often pacified him; she will do it to-day also.

The minutes passed; one hour after another went by. She wandered restlessly up and down, and looked eagerly right and left. The bell of a steamer was sounding. She started. What a shrill tone! The travellers are streaming in from all sides. The bell rings a second time. She smiled, although a little constrainedly.

"I'm sure he'll stop—he cannot go away in anger."

Then a waiter brings her a letter. She tears it open. There are only a few words.

"Farewell! I have given it up."

That was what she had wished. Given it up! Hateful words, as they stand written there! What does he mean by it? Not a word about a future meeting, not a word about a reconciliation.

The bell rings for the third time. She looks up. A well-known form is hurrying down to the pier. Without a farewell? Without one kind word? Her heart sinks within her. She beckons, she calls.

He does not look round, only hurries forward all the faster. A nameless terror seizes her. What if, the next year, he should really go to Italy? What if some accident should happen to him? What if she should never see him again? She flies down the slippery bank, she rushes after him to the wooden pier.

He sets his foot on the gangway, then feels a touch on his arm. He turns round.

"What is it you wish?" he asks politely.

"Why did you not say goodbye to me?" she gasps out.

"Goodbye," he says coldly, bowing as deeply as the crowd will admit.

She answers neither his farewell nor his bow. She gazes at him with wild, terror-stricken eyes.

"Pass along please!" comes from the deck of the steamer.

He crosses the plank without looking round again and disappears in the crowd on the ship.

Then it seems to her as if she is standing suddenly in another world. The sunshine on the glittering waves, which usually delights her, hurts her eyes. Life and movement, which she generally enjoys, deafen her. She leans wearily against the railing and gazes at the foam beaten up by the wheel of the steamer.

What shall she do here now? What, indeed, is there for her to live for any more? What shall she look forward to, the whole year through? Why should she work, if he is not to praise or blame?

"Given up! Given up!" It seems to sound in her ears, in the working of the engine, in the turning of the wheel, in the rushing of the waters! In all the life and movement about her, she hears only two words: "Given up!"

The gangway is drawn back, and the steamer moves off.

Now she can see him. She will send only one glance towards her fast disappearing happiness, whose full value she has only recognized when she has lost it for ever.

She turns, totters—a strong arm holds her fast. She leans her head on the faithful breast of her friend, and tears, happy tears, stream down over her pale cheeks. Her cold hands rest in his warm ones, and the letter flutters unperceived into the blue waters. It has fulfilled its mission.

Paul Gresham.

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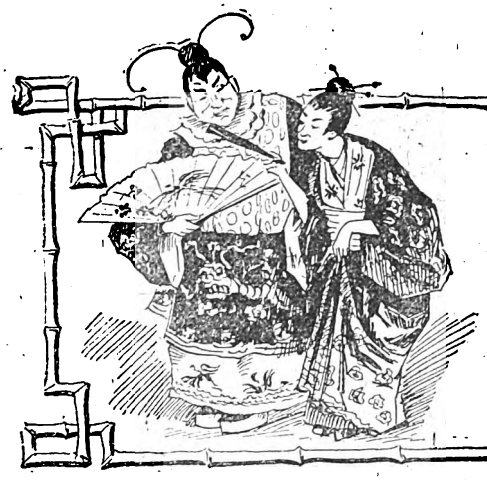

Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

X.—HE MAKES A DISCOVERY WHICH HURTS HIS FEELINGS.

"By George, but there's a chance for some fun!" suddenly exclaimed Mr. Bowser, as he looked up from his evening paper.

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Bowser.

"Why, there is to be an entertainment on Saturday evening, in connection with the church round the corner, and a gold-headed cane is to be voted to the most popular man in the town."

"But where is the fun?"

"In getting the cane. I say, we'll be well to the fore, and if I don't come out above all the other candidates, you may call me a goat! It's a fifty shilling cane, and just what I want. You must have known about the entertainment, as you go to that church very often?"

"But you see—" began Mrs. Bowser, and then checked herself.

"What do I see? The cane goes to the most popular man in the town. That conceited old Brown will think he's sure of it, and that assified Jackson will smile and grin and tumble over himself, but they won't be in it with me. It will be just like rolling off a log to win that cane."

"I—I hadn't thought of going," stammered Mrs. Bowser, after awhile.

"Well, you can make up your mind to go. Indeed, I should think you'd be proud to have me carry off the prize. Won't it please you to discover that I'm the most popular man in the town?"

"Y-e-s, of course, but suppose it shouldn't turn out that way?"

"But it's got to turn out that way—got to do it. Haven't I been asked to stand for the next election? Haven't I contributed to the free cake and sick baby funds? Don't we give to every charity, and don't all the children in the street run after me? Why, I gave five pounds in cash to help build that very edifice. If there's a more popular man in the town than I am, I'd like to know him."

"But if you shouldn't get the cane then you'd—you'd——"

"Then I'd what? It looks to me as if you didn't want me to get it. Perhaps you had intended to vote for some other candidate. Well, you go ahead and vote for whom you please, but I'll walk home with that cane just the same. We go to the entertainment on Saturday evening."

For four days and evenings he went about talking of the matter.

That settled it, and Mrs. Bowser had no more objections to offer. Mr. Bowser took hold of the matter in his enthusiastic way. He let it be known that he was in the hands of his friends, and that his friends were expected to vote early and often and pull him through.

For four days and evenings he went about talking of the matter, with the result that "popular candidates" appeared in all directions. Mrs. Bowser had fears and doubts, but whenever she threw out a hint, Mr. Bowser drew himself up and replied:

"I shall get that cane, and don't you worry about it. It looks as if there might be a dozen candidates, but I'll smash 'em to squash as soon as the voting begins. I've

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had no less than seven men ask me if I would stand for mayor next year, and I think I'll allow myself to be nominated."

When the fateful evening finally arrived the Bowsers were on the scene at an early hour. It didn't take Mr. Bowser more than ten minutes to discover that things were not exactly as he had expected. In the first place, it was threepence a vote, and in the next he was a stranger to most of the church people and none of them seemed to have thought of him as a candidate. He soon came upon a stern, severe-looking woman, who asked him:

"I understand that you are Mrs. Bowser's husband, and how does it come that we never see you here of a Sunday with her?"

"I—I am not much of a church-goer," he stammered in explanation.

"That is, you don't feel it a duty to set a good example to others?"

"I hope I am not a bad man."

"Did it ever occur to you that you have a soul?"

"Of course."

"I am afraid it hasn't. Poor Mrs. Bowser! We often talk about and pity her. I don't think our clergyman has quite done his duty. He should call on you and have a serious talk."

A little later on, Mr. Bowser met a male acquaintance who expressed great surprise at seeing him there and asked if he intended to rent a family pew.

"I'm after that cane," was the reply.

"But you—you can't expect to win it."

"I'd like to know why not."

The man looked at him with a pitying expression, but had no explanations to make. A doubt crept into Mr. Bowser's mind for the first time, and he hunted up Mrs. Bowser to say:

"I believe this crowd has made a conspiracy to do me out of that cane."

"I don't think so," she replied, "but suppose we go home? It's crowded and uncomfortable, and I know you're not enjoying yourself."

"When I go home that cane goes with me!" he announced, as he set his jaw. "I'm either the most popular man in the town or I'm not, and it's a good time to find out how I stand."

When the voting for the cane began Mr. Bowser stood all alone. He saw that he was out of it, and Mrs. Bowser made another effort to get him home, but his mind was made up to die game.

He bought a hundred Bowser tickets at one swoop and deposited them in the box, and these put him up far ahead of any other candidate. His period of exultation was a brief one, however. It was the crowd against Bowser, but he was a fighter. He had in his purse £10 and not till the last penny was gone did he abandon the struggle. When the result was made known he found that he had lost by over 200 votes.

"Woman, this is the end."

He made no reply.

"I'm so sorry," whispered Mrs. Bowser, as she followed him out of the place.

"It was awful that you paid out £10 and didn't get the cane after all."

She heard him grinding his teeth, but he answered never a word.

"You are probably the most popular man in town, but they combined against you."

Still not a word.

Side by side they walked home and entered the house, Mr. Bowser turned up the hall gas, hung up his hat, and as Mrs. Bowser sank down into a chair he towered over her and shouted:

"Woman, this is the end."

"W—what do you mean?" she asked.

"You worked your little game well."

"But what did I do?"

"My lawyer will be here by ten o'clock in the morning. You can doubtless have yours meet him at that hour. It won't take long to arrange matters."

"But I—I——"

"That is all, Mrs. Bowser—all except the separation and alimony. As I have some papers to prepare for the office to-morrow I will bid you good night—good night."

"But can't——"

"Good night, Mrs. Bowser!" he repeated as he bowed and retired to the library—"good-night!"

M. Quad.

"Next week: He comes Home Loaded with Plans which Get Rather Upset."

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Jean the Drummer.

THEY tell the story in the little French village to this day, although the events are nearly half a century old. The children learn the story of little Jean just as they do the fables of La Fontaine.

Jean was an orphan; his mother had died when he was quite a baby and the people of the village knew nothing about her, for Jean's father had brought him there when he was about four years old.

At the end of three years his father was found dead on the high road, his death being due to heart disease. Jean had been taken in hand by a small farmer named Blanc, who worked him pretty hard and did not give him over much food.

Jean grew up dull and good for nothing save to look after cows and do odd jobs on the farm, all of which tasks he performed indifferently.

He was the laughing stock of the other children, and the only person who took any interest in him was the worthy village pastor. Jean's gentle, timid manner pleased the old cleric, who used to talk to the boy and tell him the stories about the great heroes of France and other countries.

All the children of Ambert have an imborn love of stories; they will listen by the hour to anyone who can narrate a good yarn which they can understand, and they themselves will repeat these tales to their fellows when there is no older person at hand to amuse them with fresh ones or repetitions of those which have been traditional for generations.

The pastor often gathered a number of the children about him and amused them with tales of Bayard, Charlemagne, Roland of Roncesvalles and Napoleon I.

Jean seldom had the advantage of being one of the group, as Farmer Blanc kept him busily engaged as long as it was daylight.

One evening Jean was driving his master's cows homewards for the day and he passed a knot of children who were listening attentively to an account of the victories of Napoleon the Great told by Henri, the notary's son.

Henri was educated above most of the other children and he was reciting his story in a manner calculated to fix the attention of his hearers. Jean, catching a few words, stopped to listen to the dramatic incidents and allowed his cows to wander a few yards away and there quietly graze.

The story of the great Emperor's victories was intensely interesting to Jean, who listened with dilated eyes and open mouth to the words that fell from the lips of Henri. He followed Napoleon from victory to victory, his thin face glowing with excitement and the cows entirely forgotten.

Just in the midst of an exciting narration of one of the great battles, Jean was rudely awakened from his paradise by an abrupt stop on the part of Henri.

"Look at him," cried the notary's son, pointing with his forefinger to Farmer Blanc's drudge. "Taking it all in, isn't he?"

The other children laughed heartily and some of them jeered at the boy.

"Why don't you look after your cows," inquired another boy. "You will have Old Blanc after you if you don't take care."

"Yes," chimed in Henri, "go on with your work and don't stop here listening to me. What do you know about it?"

"Let me hear the end of it!" pleaded Jean earnestly. "I want to hear how the battle finished."

"I'll tell you what," said Henri, as an idea struck him. "You shall hear the end of it if you will tell us a story afterwards."

There was another laugh at Jean's expense. He was the only child in the village who was not equal to telling a tale of some kind. The bare idea of Jean telling a story to amuse others was too much for the children.

"I can't!" exclaimed Jean in despair. "You know I can't. I can't do anything—except beat the drum."

That was his only accomplishment and it had been taught him by an old soldier who had done some work for Blanc. The veteran had shown the boy how to beat various orders on the bottom of an up-turned kettle or tin can, and Jean had proved himself an adept in this, much to the surprise of most people. He was so dull, they thought, that it was surprising he could learn anything.

But the children cared nothing for Jean's accomplishment in drum beating; stories were their attraction, and as he could not compete with them in this direction they would not allow him to stop and listen.

"Go away!" they told him. "And don't come near us again until you can tell a tale."

Jean was very sad that night when he retired to his resting place in the loft of the old barn, the back of which was near the road. He ate his bread and onions slowly and then seated himself on the floor and gazed

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into space. How he wished he had lived in the time of the Little Corporal and had served under him against his enemies.

He tried to imagine the scene from the words which Henri had uttered, but the result was unsatisfactory. Then he reached out his hand for the old tin can and the broken ladles which served him as drum and sticks respectively and begun to beat the "Charge!" in his most vigorous manner.

This exercise carried him beyond his surroundings. Time after time he went through his whole list until it is a wonder that he did not attract the attention of his master.

He had just finished the series when this thought occurred to him and he began to tremble, for Blanc was not sparing of cuffs. And just then a strong voice reached his ears. "Hallo, there!"

Jean started to his feet in dismay. Who was it? The voice seemed to come from the road, so he crept to the back of the loft, where a small door did duty for a window.

"Hallo!" came the voice again. "Where is the drummer? Who is that beating the drum calls?"

Cautiously opening the little door, Jean looked out towards the road. He was just tall enough to do this, and when the owner of the voice saw the face through the opening, he ordered Jean to come down and bring his drum with him.

Jean descended from the loft and made his way across the intervening space and through a hole in the hedge. Here he found himself confronting a troop of cavalry, to his mingled dismay and delight.

"Hallo, why it's only a child!" cried the leader. It was the same voice that Jean had heard while in the loft. "What have you got there, my little man? A tin can! Is that the drum on which you were performing just now? Who taught you?"

All these questions, uttered in quick tones, confused poor Jean, who was unable to reply. The captain waited an instant for an answer; then grasping the fact that his commanding tone had disturbed the lad's mental equilibrium, he continued more gently and more slowly:

"Come, my little man, tell me how you manage to play on that tin drum so nicely."

Encouraged by the kindly tone now adopted by the captain, the boy explained; and, in answer to further questions, gave a brief account of his life and present conditions. When he had finished, the captain spoke to the officers nearest to him and they conferred together in whispers.

"You are just the boy we want, Jean," said the captain when the consultation was over. "We have lost our drummer by an accident and we are on the look out for another to go with us to Algeria. You are a drummer ready made; will you come with us?"

Jean gasped. Go with them to Algeria—be a soldier and take part in a battle like the soldiers of Napoleon in the story which he had heard from the lips of Henri only two or three hours ago!

He was unable to speak for a few seconds and then he burst forth: "Yes, oh, yes!"

"That's good. Can you ride?"

Jean could ride; he had many times ridden the horses bareback, but he could not hold himself upright in the saddle as those soldiers were doing. He told the captain so, timidly.

"Oh, that is nothing; we will soon teach you how to do that. Can you come with us at once?"

Jean decided that he could. He was lifted up behind one of the men, the word of command was given, and when morning broke there was no trace of Jean in Ambert.

The mystery of Jean's disappearance was the subject of village gossip for a few days and then he was forgotten by all save the pastor. Blanc grumbled a good deal during the first three days and could hardly persuade himself that the boy had gone off without stealing something, but finally he had to admit that nothing was missing.

The people of Ambert heard stirring accounts of the doings in Algeria from time to time, but news circulated much more slowly in those days and the details were very meagre.

It was two years almost to a day after Jean had joined the regiment when the worthy pastor received intelligence of a great fight between the French and the Kabyles, and he quickly communicated it to the inhabitants.

In the evening he gathered some of the children round him in a quiet spot and told them as much as he knew, interspersed with references to his famous heroes, Bayard and others.

He was in the midst of the thrilling account, embellished by his own notions of what had probably occurred, when Henri, who was one of the group, interrupted him and pointed to two uniformed figures which were approaching them.

The pastor turned in that direction, shaded his eyes with his hand and tried to get a good look at the approaching strangers.

One was a tall man with military bearing, evidently a soldier of some years' standing; the other was a boy. The man had his arm in a sling.

"Perhaps they have come from the war," cried Henri, and at this remark all the children gazed with admiration and expectation at the new comers.

No one spoke again until the strangers were within half a dozen yards of the group, and then the younger hurried forward with outstretched hands to the pastor.

"Don't you know me, monsieur le curé," he asked. "I am Jean Godeau. I went away to be a drummer."

Silence for an instant and then a loud cry from all the children as they recognised the boy at whom they had jeered, the boy who could not tell a tale with the rest of them. Then they swarmed round him and his companion, while the good pastor plied the warriors with questions.

It was the old soldier who told the story. They had been in several fights, the last of which had been a great battle with the natives in which the regiment had performed prodigies of valour.

Jean had proved himself a true hero, especially in the last encounter, in which he had beaten the "Charge!" with the utmost coolness while death in various forms was all around him, and had joined in the charge with the men. He had been wounded in that battle.

Both the soldier and the drummer had been invalided home, and the former had undertaken to conduct the latter to Ambert, where Jean hoped to stay.

The Government had granted him an annuity and he was in time to enter one of the great military colleges.

"But why did you not write to me, Jean?" asked the pastor gently. "I have often wondered what had become of you. You can write a little, I know."

"They told me," stammered Jean, looking at the children, "that I was not to go near them again until I could tell a tale—and—I thought I would wait until I could tell one!"

G. KNIGHT.

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To Win Nita.

"NEVER fear, Nita, I shall come back. The saints will protect me! I wish I were as certain that your father would consent to our marriage as I am that I shall return to you unharmed."

But Nita's sobs continued in spite of the attempts of her soldier lover to comfort her.

Paulo Luvoni was a soldier inasmuch as he wore a uniform, but he was in reality one of those volunteers who came forward when Italy declared war against Austria in 1866; he was a young student who, fired with enthusiasm and desirous to liberate his country from the yoke of the foreigner, had rallied to the standard in order to fight the Austrians.

His thirst for glory was rendered more keen by the black prospect ahead of his love affairs; he was deeply enamoured of Nita Marino, the daughter of old Colonel Marino, and the girl was equally fond of him, but the colonel was decidedly averse to the union.

"I am afraid that you will be killed, Paulo," Nita managed to say between her sobs. "If I were sure that you would come back uninjured, I should be happy; for I believe that my father would not withhold his consent to my marrying a hero."

"I shall do my best to cover myself with glory," Paulo assured her with much fervency. "But I don't think we shall have much chance; we shall only be on the frontier and all the fighting will be done elsewhere. And then, I shall probably be in your father's command, and if he doesn't like me—and I know he doesn't—he may not give me a chance."

"But you must try to do something brave, dear Paulo," urged Nita, her sobs ceasing. "Don't lose any chance, and I'm certain that you have an opportunity of making a hero of yourself."

"And you will remain true to me, Nita?"

"Can you possibly doubt it?" inquired Nita reproachfully. "Have I not refused Pietro Borda, although my father favours him?"

It was true, as Paulo well knew; and he endeavoured to atone for his momentary doubt in the usual lover's fashion. And so they parted.

Paulo's forecast of his probable sphere of action proved correct; he was under the command of Colonel Marino and they were stationed in a village at some distance from the actual scene of operations, and with but little chance of doing anything that would make him conspicuous. He was constantly thrown into the company of his rival, who manifested no resentment but rather showed a desire to be very friendly.

This did not appear so surprising to Paulo as it would have done at home; in time of war things alter greatly and enemies become friends.

The colonel was certainly rather hard on Paulo, a fact which was noticed by his comrades and gained him many friends, as oppression always does.

To tell the truth, the men had not a very exalted opinion of the qualifications of the colonel either in the matter of intelligence or in that of bravery; he was more of a carpet soldier, and had mounted the ladder of promotion without actual experience on the battlefield.

These two facts contributed to make Paulo, who was a good-natured fellow, more than ever a favourite with his comrades in arms.

Paulo sighed in vain for the desired opportunity of distinguishing himself; he volunteered for every duty that might lead him into danger, because danger and glory were likely to go together; but whenever he was selected, which was seldom, the task to be performed usually turned out to be a very tame one.

One evening, when he felt more than ordinarily dispirited, he confided his trouble to a man named Marco, a keen-witted fellow a few years his senior.

Marco was one of those men who are always ready with a way out of a difficulty, and just as ready to stand by a friend in a tight place, no matter the risk to himself. In addition to that, he was fond of a joke. Any adventure which promised fun and danger had the greatest charm for him.

"You wish to marry Nita," said Marco reflectively, after a silence of nearly three minutes. "The colonel doesn't want you for a son-in-law, so the thing that remains to be done is to secure his consent by force if he will not give it otherwise. Now, I have a little plan

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which I think will work splendidly. We shall want the help of some of the men, but there will be no difficulty about that—most of the men dislike the colonel and like you. Listen!"

They were talking earnestly for several minutes afterwards, and when he rolled himself up in what remained of his blanket that night, Paulo's face wore a more serene expression than it had done since Nita had promised to be his wife.

Colonel Marino was in the habit of taking a ride for a couple of miles or so from the camp in the afternoon, unattended by any of his men; he invariably rode in one direction, whither his fellow officers knew not, but they were quite certain that there was but little risk of his meeting any of the enemy.

On the day after the conversation between Paulo and his friend, Colonel Marino set out for his customary ride, quite unconscious of the fact that some strange looking men in the garb of peasants were waiting for him in a secluded spot about a mile from the encampment.

The horse was trotting easily along the road and the colonel was lost in thought.

It seemed as though fate was playing into the hands of those men in ambush, for as Marino neared their hiding place he allowed the reins to drop loose, and the horse to slacken into a walk

"Halt!"

The word of command was given more with a view to arouse the colonel to a sense of his position than to be literally obeyed, for two men gripped the horse's bridle and brought him to a standstill without giving the officer a chance to do it.

The colonel awoke with a start to find himself hemmed in by a score of peasants, rough looking fellows whom he felt sure were connected with the Austrians.

They addressed him in a dialect which he was able to understand, and communicated to him the unpleasant intelligence that he was in the hands of men who intended to execute him at short notice.

"I protest!" he exclaimed indignantly.

He tried to draw a pistol, but his arm was seized and he was dragged violently from his horse and towards a neighbouring tree.

"You have captured me, but you must treat me as a prisoner of war!" cried Marino.

The situation was a decidedly uncomfortable one even for a man of bravery, but for Marino, who had not shown conspicuous gallantry, it was much worse. His cheeks were pale and his voice trembled, possibly with rage, but more probably with fear.

The men mumbled something in reply, but did not desist from their work of tying his arms by his sides.

Marino protested vigorously, but the men paid no heed.

He was placed against a tree, a noose was passed over his head and the other end of the rope thrown over a stout branch.

Colonel Marino felt that his last moments had come and looked about him anxiously for some indication of approaching help. Had he been calm enough to observe the men more closely, it might have struck him that they also were on the look-out for somebody.

At any rate, they did not appear to be in such a hurry with the final stages of their work.

Presently there was a sound of hoofs and from a narrow by-lane a few yards distant there came a mounted soldier who wore the uniform of Marino's regiment.

Without a moment's hesitation the new comer rode straight at the peasants, uttering loud cries which were intended to indicate a bloodthirsty desire to hack the lot of them into little pieces.

The peasants lost their courage at once and turned to flee from the daring rider, leaving the colonel unharmed; but judge of their dismay when a number of men in the uniform of Marino's regiment came scrambling through the hedges and fell upon them.

The rider pulled up his horse in amazement, while the peasants made no attempt to defend themselves but ran off as quickly as they could in all directions.

Then the rider, who was none other than Paulo Luvoni, saw the leader of the rescuers hurry towards the colonel, and he recognised Pietro Borda, his rival.

Many thoughts flashed swiftly through Paulo's brain. He guessed that in some way Pietro had learnt of the little scheme concocted by Marco and himself, and had enlisted the services of some of the men to enable him to upset the plan, and at the same time ingratiate himself more with the colonel.

He understood that the pseudo peasants did not care to defend themselves, lest their disguise should be penetrated and they should be arrested for an attempt on the life or person of their commanding officer. As to himself, he had been so far outwitted in playing the part of rescuer, but he might yet obtain some favour, unless——

Paulo turned cold; suppose Pietro knew all the plot and should inform the colonel of all the circumstances, including Paulo's complicity!

However, he must play the part as boldly as possible. He dismounted, and made his way towards Marino, who was now free of his bonds. He was met half-way by Pietro, who smiled sarcastically.

"Are you going to tell the colonel how it was you came up in time to rescue him?" asked Pietro meaningly. "I think you had better keep in the background as much as possible, or the colonel may put you under arrest."

For a moment Paulo hesitated.

An idea had struck him which seemed to promise an opportunity of partly turning the tables on Pietro, but he felt that it was not possible to entirely nullify the advantage gained by the other, and he decided to utilise his knowledge to effect a compromise.

"If you knew the scheme, why did you not warn the colonel instead of allowing him to be waylaid and then save him?" asked Paulo just as meaningly. "You hoped to gain the same advantage by what you did, as I hoped to gain by carrying out this little plot. Pietro, if you say anything of what you know, you must bring about your own downfall. If you speak, I shall not hesitate to have my say, whatever comes of it. We have both fooled the colonel, and you have gained on the whole more than I. Let us agree to get this affair over with as few words as possible."

Pietro saw the force of the argument at once and he agreed. He went back to the colonel, while Paulo remained in the background and had to be content with a share of the general thanks and to allow Pietro to take the foremost place. But the latter had to be very modest or Paulo would have betrayed all.

Marco looked very crestfallen when he heard the result of the plot, but he endeavoured to encourage Paulo by telling him that there would probably be other opportunities before they went back to their homes.

"You need not fear that it will become known," he said. "Our friends will not say anything about it.

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because that would lead to their own punishment, and, from what I can hear, the men who helped Pietro are quite innocent and know nothing whatever of the real facts. Pietro has certainly gained some advantage over you, but we will hope for the best. Your time will come, and you know the old saying that he laughs best who laughs last."

But Paulo was not so hopeful, and for several days he had scarcely a word to say to anyone; he was so moody and irritable that his friends—at least, those not in the plot—could scarcely recognise in him the light-hearted Paulo Luvoni of other days. But it is the unexpected that happens, and so it was in the case of Nita's favoured lover.

A change of plans on the part of the Italian commander caused Marino's regiment and other troops to be pushed forward, and ere long they were in touch with the enemy.

Paulo began to feel more hopeful of a chance to distinguish himself, and his hopes were realised within two days after reaching the new post.

It was early in the morning, just before daybreak, when the camp was thrown into some confusion by firing from the outposts, who, unexpectedly attacked, fell back upon the main body. It was an attack in some force and the enemy was upon them before they were fairly aroused.

In the sharp fight which followed, Colonel Marino showed himself to be a man of better mettle than had been anticipated; he rallied his men in good style and encouraged them by word and deed.

In the midst of the action a sudden rush on the part of the enemy left the colonel and two or there men alone to fight for their lives against more than twenty Austrians.

The next instant Marino's sword arm fell useless by his side and two of the enemy rushed at him to send him to his last account, but one of the men who was with him sprang in front of Marino and felled the two antagonists in rapid succession with the butt of his rifle; then, forming a little circle, with the colonel in the centre, the men prepared to sell their lives dearly.

Another rush and it was the turn of the Austrians to be swept back, and the little group of Italians were safe.

The fight raged for another hour and resulted in the defeat of the Austrians.

Paulo's opportunity had come and his triumph was assured.

Colonel Marino was so charmed by the young man's gallantry, and so thankful that his life had been saved, that, with true Italian impulsiveness, his enmity turned to affection, and without being asked he informed Paulo that he should have the hand of Nita so soon as the war was over.

As for Pietro, he was captured by the enemy during that same engagement and held prisoner until the conclusion of hostilities.

He returned to his native town just in time to hear the bells ring for the marriage of Nita and Paulo.

G. Day.

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Briton or Boer?

By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

INTRODUCTION.

For years past Britain and the Transvaal have been spoiling for a fight, and it was left to that well-known author, Mr. George Griffith, to write this strong and exciting serial nearly four years ago graphically describing a huge war between the two countries.

The story, coming so soon after the Jameson Raid, was read with unusual interest.

Now that Briton and Boer are in deadly conflict it will be interesting to read the story, and see how far the imagination of the author has actually come true.

CHAPTER XLV. (*continued*).

It was already getting dusk, and yet that ring of heroes, though shrinking every moment, was still unbroken and seemingly unbreakable, and Sergeant Bethell, who had just taken part in a charge that had been anything but a success, came to the conclusion that it was time to take some more decided action.

As a matter of fact he had been thinking seriously on the subject for some time past, and he had come to a conclusion which seemed to offer certain possible chances of success, and so, while the men who had got back alive from the charge were pulling themselves together, he trotted his horse up alongside Major Bryan's and said, just as though he had been making a most ordinary proposition:

"Say, Major, seems to me we'll never get the old man out

The portly form of Oom Paul fell on to a heap of dead men.

alive like this. Those chaps may be all they're supposed to be, but they're real grit. If they'd been raised in old Kintuck' itself they couldn't have stood up and made a squarer fight than they have done. It's going to come down dark soon, and I reckon it's about time to take stronger measures."

"It's against orders, Bethell. *We* can't," said Major Bryan rather curtly, for he was not in anything like a good humour at the repulse of the charge which he had detached himself from his own men to take part in. "The only stronger measures would be the use of attillery, and that's forbidden."

"That's so, Major, and you know I'd be a long way behind in disobeying orders, but what's the matter with roping the old man out?"

"With what?"

"With roping him out. Perhaps you never saw me use a lariat, did you? Well, I've got a regular beaut' of a one in my kit that I used to use when I was cow-punching out West. I always go around with it, and I've never had a chance of using it yet, but I guess there's a good one here. If you'll just come with me out of the scrimmage for a bit I'll show you in two shakes of a lamb's tail how it is done."

"If you can," said the Major, "I think I can promise that it shall mean promotion before you leave the field."

"Suits me down to the ground, Major, or, anyhow, it will if I live for another half-hour. Now come along and I'll tell you."

It was about fifteen minutes later that the result of Sergeant Bethell's cogitation began to be made manifest. General Carrington had been interviewed, and said, with his usual brevity:

"Yes, there'll be a commission and £500 for you if you can do it without killing him."

To which Sergeant Bethell, with equal brevity and directness, had replied:

"I'm there, General. It'll be that or a funeral," and had mounted and ridden away.

The next development of the idea was the appearance on the scene of action about four hundred yards from the southern front of the irregular square into which the last remnant of the army of the Transvaal had now resolved itself, of two bodies of a dozen men of the Matabele Legion coming on at a run, crouching close down to the ground, and drawing by ropes a light "galloping" Maxim.

Behind them was a small and select body of mounted men, including the erstwhile Rhodesian troopers, Hinton and Dempsey, and Corporal James Anson of the Lancers.

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Just a little in front of them was Sergeant Bethell, with a coil of hair-rope hung carelessly over his left arm.

As soon as the Maxim stopped in obedience to the word "halt," Major Bryan, who had followed it at a run, took his place on the saddle-seat. The cartridge-ribbon was already in its place, and the ammunition box, carried alongside by two dusky runners, was dropped into position beside it. Major Bryan gave one quick, searching glance to see that all was right, and just as the Boers' rifles came up he lowered the muzzle, pressed the spring, and let go.

The volley that should have killed every man about the gun flew wild, for the Maxim bullets got there first. Aiming no higher than the knees, he slowly swept the front face of the square with a stream of bullets for the space of about five seconds. Men and horses went down maimed and helpless, and lay writhing and crippled on the ground.

Then the Maxim stopped. Its roar was succeeded by a rapid tramp of hoofs, and Sergeant Bethell's voice, ringing out with a twang that might have pierced the ears of a graven image.

"Come on, boys. If I go over, unhitch and get back. Same for everyone else."

Then into the big, ragged gap that had been made by the Maxim fire, the four desperate men rode at a gallop in close order abreast. With sabre and revolver they cut and fought their way to within a dozen yards of where the President was still sitting upon his horse. As they came on the old man brought his rifle to his shoulder and let fly, but at the wrong man.

"I'm done, matey. Here's my bit of the rope," Trooper Dempsey gasped as he reeled back in his saddle, holding out with the last effort of his life the end of a raw hide rope to his chum, Hinton, who was riding by his side. But even as he rolled from his saddle a coil of rope swung once round Sergeant Bethell's head and then, like a long thin snake, sprang out towards the President.

"Fixed him! Right about—gallop!" the big Yankee screamed as he pulled his horse round. "Hold tight, boys! The old man's heavy."

Then there came a sudden jerk and a hard strain on the rope, and then the portly form of Oom Paul seemed to leap from the saddle and fall on to a little heap of dead and dying men beside him.

All this had happened in about the same time that one could put a cartridge in the breech of a rifle. Those who had been near enough to the President to see what had happened were for the moment paralysed by the suddenness and utterly unexpected nature of the attack. The first to recover himself was Captain Eloff. He brought his rifle up, took a quick sight at the broad back of Sergeant Bethell and pulled the trigger. The empty click of the bolt-spring told him that the magazine was empty. There was no time even to slip a single cartridge into the chamber, so he dropped his rifle and made a spring forward, with both hands extended, and caught the Yankee's horse by the bridle just as it was forcing ahead through the press with its trailing load behind it.

The next instant a revolver barrel was at his head.

"Let go, young man."

"Nay, Verdom, nay!"

"Sorry."

Bang.

The next instant as brave a man as had ever lost his life for another was lying under the horses' feet with a bullet through his brain. The next there rang out a hoarse yell such as could only have come from Caledonian throats, and three hundred of the Cape Highlanders with levelled bayonets dashed into the broken face of the square. A stream of flame ran along the rifle muzzles, and as man and horse went down before the rain of bullets, the line of steel swept on, opening for a moment as it passed the three troopers and the still prostrate President, and at once closing up on the other side

"Guess we've got the old gentleman sure now," said Sergeant Bethell, as he put the strain on the rope again.

"I'd reckon we'd best tote him gently out of here, so that he doesn't get hurt, and then we'll take him to the General."

EPILOGUE.

"UNITED AFRICA."

EARLY on the morning of the twelfth day after the sun had set on the Waterloo of Africa, every window and balcony, every porch, and even housetop, that overlooked or even afforded a distant view of the Kerk Plein in Pretoria and the streets leading to it was filled with people—some jubilant and triumphant, some sullen, sad, and angry, and some cynically indifferent, but all, save these last few, waiting in eager anticipation for the curtain to rise on the last act of the South African tragedy.

Princess Vavara stood with her new acquaintance.

Just at the corner of the balcony of the Grand Hotel stood a little group of people, each of whom had, willingly or unwillingly, directly and indirectly, taken no small share in the work whose consummation they were about to witness. Princess Vavara stood between her father and the Baron, and beside her was a new acquaintance, whose fresh frank, open beauty heightened by the keen breezes of the veld and the ardent kisses of the African sun, formed a striking and delightful contrast to the paler and more chastened loveliness of the daughter of a hostile race who was just then so sweetly and frankly congratulating her on the part she had played in the drama which had begun at Krügersdorp but three short months before—for this was the girl who had taken that wild night-ride from her ruined and desolated home near Puri across country to the Pioneer Road, and had guided General Carrington back to the scene of his first victory over the invading Boers.

She had followed the army of the North through all its battles and journeyings since then, nursing the sick and wounded, and using all those gentle arts with which the tenderness of woman loves to soften the sternness of man's warfare, and now in the hour of victory she was finding the reward of her devotion, not only in the triumph of her race and nation, but also in the knowledge that among all the heroes of the campaign none had done harder work or won more honest honour than the bronzed and soldierly lover whom she was so soon to call by an even dearer name.

As for the Prince and Princess, they waited for the pageant that was to come with the calm, good-humoured resignation of skilled and practised gamblers who had

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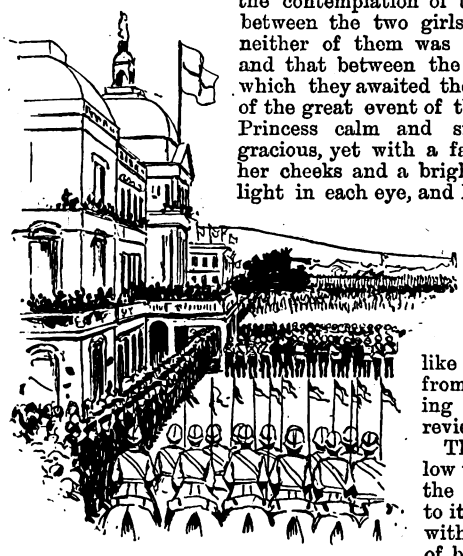
played for a very big stake and lost it through no fault or failing of their own.

Their mission had been a failure, and they frankly acknowledged the fact. Had victory inclined to the other side, Russia would by this time have been clearing a way for herself through the chaos which must have followed the triumph of those who might have won but could never have held, and in that case Prince Paul would have added one more success to the long list of brilliant achievements which distinguished his diplomatic career.

As it was, by the irony of Fate he and his daughter had unconsciously contributed to the defeat of those by whose victory they could alone have profited. If they had never gained the confidence of Mr. Secretary Leyds, and through him that of the Executive of the Transvaal, everything might have been different. If Russian intrigue had not prevented the arrival of the German squadron in Delagoa Bay, and if Prince Paul's telegram to Michael Ostroff had not brought in Admiral Tcherkoff's instead, Admiral Dale would not have captured those all-important telegrams and dispatches which had revealed the whole of the vast plot against the supremacy of Britain in South Africa, and had enabled those who, without actually appearing on the scene of strife, had used their genius and their gold to confound the intriguers, and to bring men and ships and materials of war into Sonth Africa just in time to save the loyalists from seemingly certain defeat.

The Baron was naturally in the best of humours with himself and all the world. He had played a difficult game with consummate skill, and won it, and in doing so he had checkmated one of the most skilful diplomatists in Europe, without even awaking his suspicions until it was too late. In fact, the triumph of that day was in no small measure his, and, therefore, no one had a better right to enjoy it.

Major Bryan had delivered his sweetheart into the Baron's care until his military duties should be over for the day, and the really kindly heart of the man, as distinguished from the cool and calculating diplomatist, was charmed by the contemplation of the contrast between the two girls, for really neither of them was much more, and that between the attitude in which they awaited the beginning of the great event of the day—the Princess calm and smiling and gracious, yet with a faint flush on her cheeks and a bright spark of light in each eye, and Madge Morrison, all akindle with excitement and genuine, undisguised delight, like a girl fresh from school waiting for a great review to begin.



The Guard of Honour wheeled into the square.

The square below them and all the approaches to it were lined with long ranks of bronzed, stalwart men, in the simple, practical, and yet picturesque uniforms of the Northern trooper forces, and the sun, which had dissipated the wonted clouds of the rainy season as though for the express purpose of lending an added splendour to the spectacle, glittered brilliantly on thousands of bayonets and brightly-polished horse-trappings.

In front of the Raadzaal a great oblong space extending past the end of the church down to the other side of the square was kept clear by treble ranks of the Leicestershire, York and Lancaster, the West Riding, Middlesex, and Hampshire Regiments, and in the centre stood the massed regimental bands. Kerk Street West, towards the President's house, was lined by two long ranks of the Cape Highlanders. Out of deference to the feelings of the conquered people, the Basutos had been sent home immediately after the battle of Amajuba, and the Matabele Legion had been left behind at the ruins of Elandsfontein, while a thousand men of the Naval Brigade were drawn up on either side of the great porch of the Government building.

Just as the clock of the Raadzaal struck the first stroke of ten Madge Morrison pointed across the square past the corner of the Standard Bank and cried:

"Ah, here they come at last!"

Then blending with the clang of the bell there came the skirl of bagpipes and the stirring strains of "The Campbells are Coming," and then the tramp of hoofs and the jingle of accoutrements. Thousands of eyes were turned simultaneously on the end of Kerk Street.

Then the pipers of the Cape Highlanders strode into the square. After them came the heads of two columns of Lancers and Hussars forming the Guard of Honour, and between them rode Sir Charles Warren in the uniform of a Major-General of the Royal Engineers, with General Goodenough on his right and General Carrington on his left, and followed by a brilliant staff of officers.

It was a glorious contrast to that outwardly similar scene on April 5th, 1881, when Sir Evelyn Wood entered Pretoria—then a British town about to be given over to England's enemies under the terms of a disgraceful peace following on a shameful defeat.

The two lines of the Guard of Honour wheeled into the square, one to the right, and the other to the left. The pipers halted beside the bands, the rattle of steel trembled shrilly through the air as thousands of bayoneted rifles came up to the present, and the three Generals with their staff strode up to the front of the Raadzaal portico and dismounted. All this while the four-coloured flag of the Republic, whose last hour had just struck, had been flying from the top of the great flagstaff above the portico in front of the central dome.

Standing bareheaded between his brother commanders, in the midst of three sides of a square formed by the officers of his staff, Sir Charles Warren read the Royal Warrant appointing him Her Majesty's High Commissioner for South Africa, and Governor of Cape Colony in the place of Lord Rosmead, who had resigned an office which the logical result of his fatal policy had made it impossible for him to retain.

Then, in the name of the Queen-Empress and in virtue of the powers conferred upon him, Sir Charles read a proclamation declaring the Orange Free State and the South African Republic to be from that day integral portions of Her Majesty's South African dominions and subject to the Government of Cape Colony.

As the last of the momentous words left his lips the Vierkleur fluttered down from the flagstaff, and in the midst of breathless silence a ball of silk ran up in its place. Every eye was turned upon it as it rose. Then Sir Charles Warren, taking a few paces forward, said in a loud voice that rang clearly through the stillness that had fallen upon the assembled multitude:

"Officers, non-commissioned officers, and men of Her Majesty's forces in South Africa, seventeen years ago the distinguished officer who now holds the exalted position of Commander-in-Chief of the British Army declared, standing almost on this very spot, that as long as the sun shone the British flag should continue to wave over the territory of the Transvaal.

"In consequence of circumstances to which there is here no occasion to allude that promise was broken, but broken

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though no fault of any loyal man who ever bore arms for the British Crown in South Africa. To-day we have come to redeem it. You, by your valour and discipline and the patriotism which has brought thousands of you from the ends of the earth to the protection of your loyal fellow-subjects here, have made it possible for me to renew that pledge.

"The Queen's authority is now unquestioned from the Zambesi to the Cape—may God preserve it so until the days of Her Majesty's remotest successors, and may the troubles and sorrows, the divisions and the strifes which have hitherto torn and desolated South Africa cease from now for ever! God save the Queen!"

The same instant the ball at the top of the flagstaff burst, and the scarlet and gold blazonry of the Royal Standard floated out on the breeze and glittered in the bright sunshine which seemed to greet it so gladly. Then the massed bands of the regiments struck up the opening bars of the National Anthem, the serried lines of the troops stiffened into almost statuesque rigidity, and as the strains of the music died away the guns of the forts which were to have made Pretoria impregnable, but which had never fired a shot in warfare, thundered out a royal salute echoed by a roar of cheers; and when these, too, had died away, the Princess laid her hand on the Prince's arm and said with a little tremour of real emotion in her voice:

"We have lost, my father, but we have been conquered by men. Yes, they may be world-pirates and robbers of the earth, but these English are men after all!"

After the final collapse of the Boer power in the second Battle of Amajuba, and the proclamation of Her Majesty's authority over what had been the two Republics, the pacification of Africa was speedily completed, and a new era of prosperity immediately dawned.

The terrible lessons of the brief but bloody war were this time not learnt in vain. A standing army of twenty-five thousand men was formed of the regular colonial troops, backed by a reserve of thirty thousand of the loyal burghers, and five native regiments, foremost among which was Major, now Colonel, Bryan's redoubtable Matabele Legion.

A permanent South African squadron composed of six first and second-class battleships, twelve cruisers, twenty-five destroyers and torpedo boats held the waters from Wallfisch Bay to the Pungué River, which, with Delagoa Bay, had been purchased from the Portuguese Government.

By a momentous coincidence, which perhaps was not all coincidence, the news of the crowning victory of Amajuba was published in the English newspapers the day after the British Premier, in the name of now united Britain, had thrown down the gauntlet to the combination of Powers which had sought, and sought too long successfully, to coerce the Empire into a shameful submission. From the pinnacle of her splendid isolation, Britain had thrown her glove in the face of Europe, and Europe had suddenly discovered that it had too much to do with its own jealousies and conflicting ambitions to take the challenge up, for in the hour of South Africa's need the voice of Greater Britain had spoken and told Europe in unmistakable accents that it would have to meet, not a single nation, but a whole race in arms.

The claims of Russia for the destruction of one of her ships and the capture of the rest of her squadron in British waters were submitted to arbitration, and a fair price was paid by the British Government. Ex-President Kruger, Vice-President Joubert, and Mr. Secretary Leyds were conveyed to Cape Town and there impeached on a charge of high treason, culminating in armed revolt against the Suzerain Power, and in obedience to the sentence pronounced by the court through the mouth of Her Majesty's High Commissioner, they were placed on board the *St. George* and deported to the island of St. Helena—there to remain during her Majesty's pleasure, and to meditate, perhaps by the spot in which had once rested the remains of the great Napoleon, on the dangers of overweening ambition, and the real strength of that mighty Power whose generosity they had flouted, and whose long forebearance they had mistaken for weakness.

THE END.

A NEW SERIAL STORY

BY GEORGE C. WALLIS

Will begin in next week's SHORT STORIES. It is entitled:

"EINAR OF THE LONG SWORD."

. . A VIKING STORY . .

The author was responsible for "The Winning of Gunhild" "The Gladiator," and other tales which have appeared in SHORT STORIES from time to time.

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "Fortune's My Foe," by J. Bloundelle Burton, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. L. Loynes, 43 Allesley Street, Birmingham. Attempts for this week's prize must deal with FUNNY STORIES ABOUT CATS, and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, June 18th, Post-cards only, please.

Rather Irish.

An amusing incident recently occurred in an important southern town in connection with the departure of the local reservists for the front.

The men were escorted to the railway-station by a vast number of people, foremost among whom was the mayor, a gentleman more generally known for his generous heart and kindly disposition than for his educational attainments.

In the course of the farewell speech, he said "the reservists might leave for the seat of war without anxiety as to the welfare of those who were near and dear to them, as these would be amply provided for, and that when they returned from the war they would find that their widows and orphans had been well looked after in their absence."

L. L.

Rather Much Kindness.

In the far North of Scotland a gentleman recently called on an old lady, on behalf of the South African Refugees' Fund.

"You will recollect," began the visitor, cheerily, "that you asked me to call again in a week's time. I trust I may now have your subscription."

"That you will, my guid man; sic misery I never heard o'! I've been saving up ever since I saw you."

And the kindly old soul tripped back to the kitchen, and returned with a big bundle.

"Noo, noo, sir, dinna bother to thank me, but see the Boers don't get it. There's scones, and tatties, and——"

But the collector had fled.

J. A.

Not Killed.

The following good story is related by a private who went through the battle of Elandslaagte:

"After the fight had been going on some little time, I saw my sergeant stagger backwards, throw up his arms, and fall to the ground. I leant over him.

"'I am wounded,' he gurgled.

"'Where?'

"'In the throat. I am dying.'

"An examination, however, proved the sergeant to be unhurt. The ball had really struck him in the neck, but had bounded off his collar, the shock choking him for the moment. As the truth dawned on him, his face lit up with joy; and he went into the fight again, white, but determined."

G. W. H

Good Enough to Practise On.

"Stop! Don't shoot!" cried an excited sandy-whiskered man, who was trying to hide behind a boulder several sizes too small for him, "I'm not a Boer; I'm an American."

"Don't excite yerself, me [illegible]y," retorted Mike, of the Dublin Fusiliers. "You are good enough to practise on, anyway."

And business went on as usual.

H. E. L.

Commandeered.

One morning a few weeks ago a soldier entered the camp at Modder River leading a scraggy-looking goat by a piece of string. His entrance was the signal for a burst of laughter from his comrades.

"What ho, Dick!" cried one of them. "Wot 'ave you got there? 'Ave you stolen it?"

"Stolen it be blowed!" said Dick. "I've commandeered it, an' left my blooming receipt chalked on a tree."

H. C.

"Biltong."

A Boer who was taken prisoner in one of the recent battles, got to talking with one of his gaolers. After the conversation had gone on for some little time the prisoner took something out of his pocket which looked like plug tobacco, and, biting off a piece, offered it to his gaoler.

The gaoler informed him that he did not "chew," whereupon the Boer surprised him by saying that it was not tobacco but "biltong" (dried meat).

B. E.

A Boer Cigar.

A young subaltern who had only just learnt to smoke before joining the service was the victim of a nice trick on the part of his brother officers.

The regiment had been ordered to South Africa, and soon after its arrival at Capetown one of the officers went to a tobacconist's and bought the biggest and strongest cigar to be obtained.

On his arrival at the camp again he offered to give five shillings to anyone who would smoke the cigar to the very end.

The subaltern, not wishing to let the officers know that he had not learnt to smoke long, at once accepted the offer, and actually did smoke the cigar to the end, but ever since then he has not cared to see cigars anywhere near him.

T. P.

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With Lights.

Two Dublin Fusiliers, on their first night of camping out, were much annoyed by mosquitoes. So they decided to put out the light and cover their heads over.

After a while one of them peeped cautiously out, and seeing some fireflies glittering in the darkness, said:

"It's no good, Pat; here they are again, and, bedad, they've brought lights to find us." M. C.

Kruger's Change.

"HAVE you heard the latest about the war?" said a young boy to his father.

"Well, what is it, Jim?" asked the father.

"Kruger asked the Queen to change a sovereign," said Jimmy.

"And did she do it?"

"Well, yes, she did, and she sent it out in 'Bobs,' don't you know."

E. R. P.

A Smart Tommy.

WHILE the Boers have been so cunning in the present war it is gratifying to know that our Tommy is also full of resource and ingenuity.

An amusing instance of the above actually occurred outside Ladysmith during the attack on that place.

A Tommy had been captured by a party of Boers, who were in the line of fire from the British troops, and they were conveying their prisoner towards their own position when he suddenly threw up his arms and, with a cry of agony, pitched forward on his face.

The Boers, thinking he was done for, and the bullets from the British getting unpleasant, gave their captive a parting kick and left him.

So soon as they were gone, however, the supposed-wounded Tommy got up on his feet and walked back to his lines, leisurely smoking one of his late captors' pipes which had been dropped in their hurry to get out of the line of fire.

T. B.

Identified.

MANY people strongly suspected that Widow Ware's soldier son, whose virtues she extolled so persistently, was a creation of her fancy, for no one had ever seen him in the neighbourhood, and some were ready to swear that she had never had any boys.

One day, to test her, a practical joker brought her a photograph of some soldiers in Natal, and, pointing out a young fellow, whose whiskers had run riot over his face, and whose name was not given, asked her if she recognised her son.

"My son!" gasped the widow, who couldn't read a word of the text. "That's never my Jimmy, is it?"

"It says Private James Ware, son of Betty Ware, anyhow," the wag gravely assured her, "so I reckon it must be your boy."

The widow gazed at the picture with admirably-feigned earnestness, and then clapped her hands in delight.

"So it is!" she cried rapturously. "It takes more than a beard to cheat a mother's eye. I can tell him by the dimple in his chin."

R. A. H. G.

The Colonel's Mistake.

A REGIMENT quartered in Scotland had among them an expert gymnast, who taught his brother subalterns how to walk across the barrack room on their hands.

While thus engaged the other evening the door opened, and the colonel, a strict disciplinarian, entered the room, gazed attentively at the inverted company, shook his head gravely, and departed without uttering a word.

Extra parade duty was the least punishment expected for this breach of discipline.

Some days passed, however, and no notice being taken, it was thought an apology and explanation should be offered by the prime instigator of these unsoldierlike movements.

A reference being made to the memorable night, the colonel amazed the intending apologist by exclaiming:

"Hush! my dear fellow, I would not have anybody know it for the world. The fact is, I had been dining out with an old brother officer who had served with me in India, and, 'pon my life, I had no idea the wine could have had such an effect upon me; but when I looked in to see if you were all right in your quarters, I could have sworn that I saw you all upside down!"

T. P.

Nothing Else to Laugh At.

THE old major was a hot-tempered man. Something in the kitchen had displeased him and he was letting everybody know it. He happened to glance at his seven year-old heir just in time to catch him smiling.

"What are you laughing at?" roared dad. "I don't want people round me grinning because I object to the way things are done and state my wishes plainly. Are you laughing at me, you young imp?"

"No, dad," replied the boy meekly.

He had really smiled at the way the cat had scampered from the room when the head of the family pranced on her tail.

"Then what are you laughing at?" asked dad, more angry than ever. "There's nothing else in the room to laugh at, is there?"

Then he saw his wife smile, and he made things so lively that a reporter who was passing thought he was on the track of a first-class murder, and climbed over the area rails and got into the front room in his eagerness to secure a good report.

H. J.

Why She Wept.

A CERTAIN young lieutenant living in Harborne had a dreadful experience some weeks ago. He had not been married long, and his wife (whom no one could insult by calling "domesticated"), owing to the temporary absence of the "general," had to cook her first dinner on this occasion.

The husband arrived at one o'clock, but, instead of finding the mid-day meal, found his wife crying bitterly.

"Mary!" he said with astonishment, "whatever is the matter?"

"Oh, John!" she said between her sobs, "the dinner won't be ready till three o'clock. That horrid tradesman has sent me a rabbit to cook. It came at nine o'clock, and it has taken me from then until now to pluck it!"

John is expected to soon regain his mental balance.

Q. R. F.

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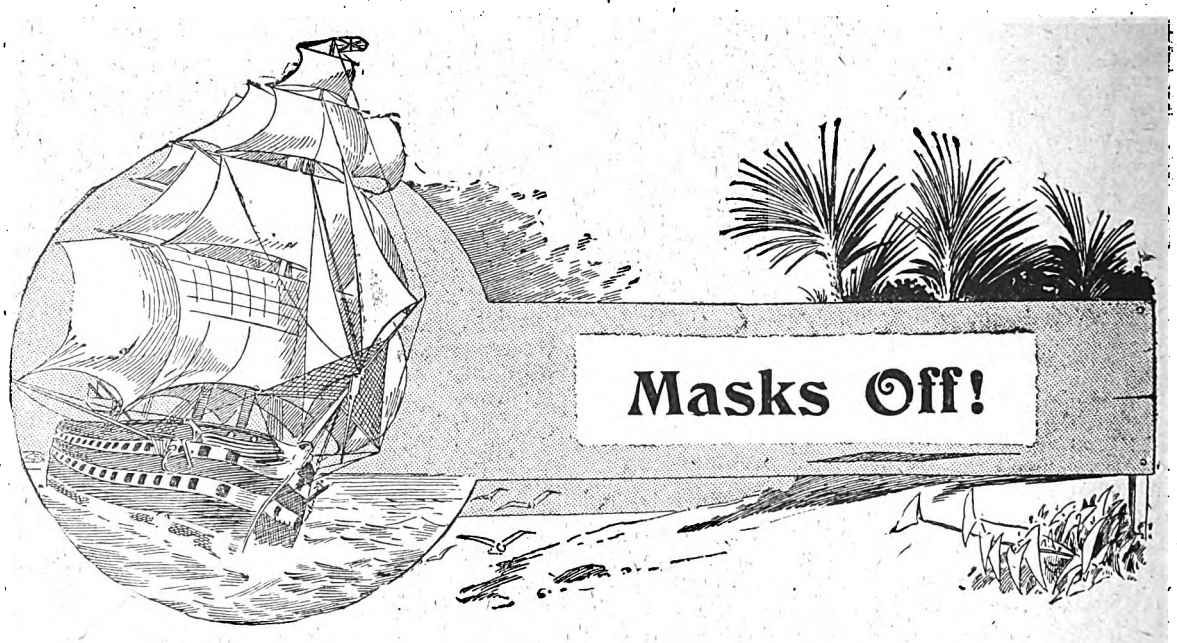

Masks Off!

THEIR friendship was not ordinary gush and girlish outpouring. It had stood the test of time, and because there is so much to be said after a long absence, twilight shadows filled the room before the girl had finished the story of her new-found happiness.

As she moved across the room she paused at the door and turned.

"My *fiancé* will dine with us this evening, so make yourself beautiful, Lilian. No," with a decisive shake of her beautiful head. "I won't tell you his name, or say another word. We will be late for dinner."

Judith's guest was leaning back in a great chair that made her look absurdly young and childish as Judith's *fiancé* entered the drawing-room unannounced.

He only knew that a pair of dark-lashed, blue-gray eyes looked steadily into his, that a sweet, mocking mouth uttered some formal words of greeting, that for an instant he held the slim cool fingers, when he found himself in the dining-room.

The evening was not a success, and yet it would have been hard to tell wherein the failure lay.

Judith before retiring, in that hour of woman's confidences, spoke to her friend about it.

"You were as courteous as possible, my dear; but I felt that you did not like Lewis."

"Judith!"

Her guest turned from the mirror. She was brushing the pretty tendrils of soft hair that curled so wilfully about her brow. "If anything went wrong to-night it was my fault. I am tired. To-morrow I will do my best to redeem it."

But Judith was not content. She questioned Ellington a few days later.

"You do not like my friend," she said sorrowfully. "How can you be indifferent to her charm, Lewis?"

"I am not," he answered gallantly. "Miss Morrison has a trick of lifting her brows, as you do, and the voices are not unlike. How did I never hear of her?"

"That is easily explained. She has been abroad since we left boarding-school nearly five years ago. You and I have not discussed old schoolmates." She smiled charmingly. "But you have not told me why you dislike her."

"I have given you no reason to think I do."

"But you do," she persisted.

"No, Judith. I do not like Miss Morrison." She had not before detected the weariness in his voice.

Such a perplexed young hostess presided over affairs the next few days. Lilian herself came to the rescue and proposed a house-party. And after that there were picnics, drives and boating parties in gay succession.

The first night of September found the gaiety at its height.

A masquerade dance was in progress. It was the night preceding the departure of Judith's guests. Even Lilian was to go.

Not far from midnight Ellington moved restlessly through the winding walks.

He held a mask in his hand, for the night was hot. The denseness of the shadows, the luminousness of the stars, the coolness after the heated atmosphere of the ballroom, were grateful to him.

Strange how that snatch of verse throbbed and surged through his brain: "For me who can never be thine."

How the words repeated themselves! 'Twas the night, the sound of the dancers' feet, the clash of music. As he paused under a small balcony, a fan, a dainty thing, brushed his face and fell at his feet. A woman leaned over the balcony. He could see the gleam of her white throat and bare arms.

"Are you, too, weary of the dance?" he asked, as he returned the fan.

She made some light reply.

"Miss Morrison!" She noticed the quick change in his voice. "You leave us to-morrow. May I not bid you good-bye?"

"Are you, then, so anxious to see me go?" Did he

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imagine it, or was there a reproach in her voice? He drew nearer.

"The dancers, the garden, the music as it comes to us here, of what does it make you think? You will not tell me? Then, whether you like it or not, I will tell you. I will make it clear between us. Fate has brought us to this balcony.

"Have you forgotten the old garden there beyond the sea"—he caught her hands—"and that last night when I told you of my love? You sent me from you coldy, but I knew you cared."

"Have you forgotten Judith?" The sweet voice sounded harsh. She drew her hands from him and stood erect.

"You know I have been true to her," passionately. "I will never speak like this again. Judith has told me the story—a simple one. A quiet sea, a sudden squall, an overturned boat; but it left you free. Free—while I wandered over the earth trying to forget and for ever haunted by the wraith of a girl with sunny hair and wistful blue-grey eyes. Why did I not know? It was not doubt, you could not doubt me. Answer, Lilian."

She leant against the railing. She did not speak.

"There could be many excuses," bitterly.

"I was in Egypt, but letters would have reached me. 'Twas, then, reserve. You could not. I laughed when Judith told me your lover's death had spoiled your life."

Still the girl uttered no word.

He leant upon the railing. "I am going now." His voice had grown tender. "I would do nothing that would bring regret to you or her. I may not touch you, but I love you! I love you! I love you! Going, and you stand there as if you were turned to stone! You will not say the words for which my heart has hungered? But once, dear."

"Once and for ever hold my breath," she gasped. "Then I love you!"

He laughed in low content. "Good-bye," he said, although he did not move. "Good-bye."

He turned to go.

"Lewis," her voice was almost a whisper, "ask her to release you. Tell her tenderly. Perhaps it will not hurt much. If it fails, touch her pride."

He looked at her incredulously. "I cannot!"

"Then you do not love—"

"I will not pain her so. We are inured to pain."

He looked out over the garden. Unconsciously he crushed in his grasp a rose that grew on the balcony.

How the struggle swayed in the soul of the woman who stood so near him! How the inner voice wrangled with her! "Renounce him. Renounce him! He is hers! He is mine! He loves her! Let him go! I will not! The mistake is his! Renounce—quick—before it is too late!"

He leant toward her. "Forgive me, my sweet, and—good-bye. It is good-bye this time."

For answer she leant forward and touched his brow with her lips. "It is out of your hands," she said. "Go to her." She slipped the mask from her face.

"Judith!" hoarsely. "How could you! The voice is ——"

"You deceived yourself," she said, gently, "and the awakening is better now. Words cannot undo what has been said. Leave me, please."

There was a tone in her voice he could not disobey. Without a word he left her.

* * * * *

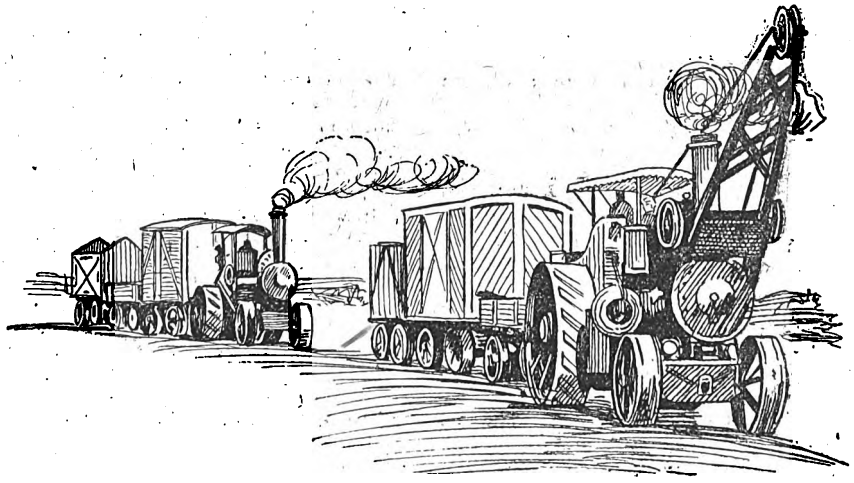
The moon was coming large and full over the hills. It brought her figure out of the dark.

The river moved far below her like a flash of silver between its walls.

The beauty, the passion of the night shook her to the soul.

She stood silently, her lips moved as if in prayer; when she turned to go back to her guests the light that illumined her face was not from the moon.

T. A. Peters.



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TWENTY years ago there was in a Mexican-Spanish town of Mexico a dancing hall known as the Tivoli Alegre. It was not a swell place, by any means. For it was built mostly of rough sun-dried clay bricks, and the floors and tables and stage were of the roughest kind.

But, being cheap, it was much patronised by the Mexican haciendados from the sugar plantations round about, who hadn't many pesos to spend in amusement, the poorly paid clerks in the tiendas, and the assayers and other *employées* from the Santa Cruz mine.

Being an American-owned mine, the Santa Cruz men were mostly Americans—young fellows fresh from engineering colleges and the like.

And Santa Cruz not being the liveliest place in the world, they were in the habit of turning themselves loose on occasions in this same dancing hall—even to George Hewitt, the chief engineer, who was an Englishman, and who, being older and more experienced than the others, should have known better, but evidently didn't.

"La Conchita," or "Little Shell," was the star of the place, and admired alike by Mexicans, Spaniards and Gringos. And no wonder, either, for Concha was as good and sweet as she was pretty.

All the Americans and Britishers in the place had made love to her; mostly by means of pantomime and sighs, not knowing the Spanish to otherwise express their feelings.

But even those who could talk her language were frowned upon by Concha—to none of them would she have anything to say. And as for the Mexicans and Spaniards—in despair they had long ago retired, to worship at other shrines. Of a truth, Concha was *dificil*. Mr. George Hewitt, the engineer, found it otherwise. As a matter of form, more than anything else, he had sent many bunches of big poppies and crimson roses to the pretty dancer, likewise taking his drinks during the evening close to the ricketty stage on which she, with true Spanish grace and *verve*, danced the exquisite Spanish "jota," and, to please the Mexicans, the "jarabe."

As a matter of form only—it could not mean anything. For he was engaged to a girl, home in England, as sweet and fresh as a white violet. While poor little Concha—well, even though a dancing girl does happen to be good, she rarely gets the reputation, and no one could liken the "Little Shell" to a violet. More was she like the flaring, glowing crimson of her country's cactus flower.

But Concha, no doubt attracted by Hewitt's cool indifference, fell wildly in love with him. And, whatever else she knew, control, hiding of one's feelings, was not therein counted; even from her passing glance at Hewitt, one could tell. Though, for that matter, he was the last to know.

Men are proverbially blind, and perhaps he would never have suspected had not a cynical friend imparted the information. Naturally, Hewitt was shocked—he had done nothing to win the girl's fancy; why should she be fond of him? However, so long as she was, well! If a woman cares for you, you can't be rude to her.

Following out his theory that letting a woman see a great deal of you often cures her fondness, Hewitt began to bestow some of his idle moments on the pretty Concha.

To his surprise, he found that she was as thoroughly pure and sweet-minded as his own *fiancée* at home. Of course, she had no mind, no training, no education to speak of, and of the Anglo-Saxon belief that a man's wife should be his friend, companion and helpmate she had no conception.

To her, the man one loves is a Superior Mortal (with capitals) to be worshipped, waited upon, indulged, petted and comforted to the last degree. One of the customs of the dark ages, as Hewitt amusedly thought, but still a pleasant one. For without doubt it was soothing to a man to occasionally find a woman who could think of him alone; whose few leisure hours were spent in devising plans for his comfort and amusement, and who even thought it the best of all good things to merely be allowed to gaze at and worship him.

Probably, some men would have found it embarrassing. Hewitt didn't! For more and more of his time was spent with Concha, until at last the old aunt who cared for her and watched her by day and by night, hinted openly at the matter of marriage. Concha laughed—she had not thought of marriage! Of course, she had no doubt but what it would be, later—people who truly loved each other always married! And loving her as did "the brave Englishman," surely he would be as wretched away from her as she would be without him. In truth, she was too happy in merely loving the man to think or care for the future.

Antonio, her cousin, did think about it, however, being a "Gachupin" of some business sense, besides having a deep and not altogether selfish passion for his little cousin. He had always loved her and her oft-repeated

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"No" to him had been the cause, as she was many times reminded, of his taking to tequila and cognac. And even after her refusal, and though he was wildly jealous of the Englishman, he still had Concha's good at heart, as he told himself. So that, after watching the two for awhile, it appeared to him that it would be well to find out just how matters stood, and what Hewitt's intentions were—in the interest of Concha.

It was the night of the "Noche Bueno." The town was gay with the green, white, and red colours, and the halls, plazas, and dancing halls were adorned with flowers and streamers.

Over in the Tivoli Alegre Spanish and Mexican colours were mingled in the greatest harmony, likewise groups of Spanish haciendados from Can Vincente, and Mexicans from the Santa Ana.

La Conchita had just finished the "Jarabe," with wild shouts of applause and "Buenos" from the audience, the latter being more than usually enthusiastic on account of also being more than usually tipsy.

Even Hewitt himself, in his corner near the stage, felt more sentimental than was customary with him and gazed tenderly after the small, crimson-clad figure of Concha, as she disappeared *en route* to her dressing-room.

He waited to have another copita before joining her, however, thinking that she would thereby have more time to get wrapped up and be ready for him when he did come.

He was going to take her home afterwards and talk to her for an hour or so—longer she would not permit. So, after tossing off the copita of brandy, he lit a cigarette and moved off towards the dressing-room.

A strangled shriek of "Dios Mio! Help!" reached him as he turned the corner. Thinking it came from the dancing room he paid no attention. It was repeated and he recognized Concha's voice. He ran to her room. She was struggling in the furious grasp of Antonio, who was swearing by all the saints that she should never marry the foreigner; she must marry him—Antonio, who loved her. To the devil with the Englishman.

Infuriated beyond all control, Hewitt flung himself upon the drunken Mexican and slammed him against the wall, shaking him as a terrier would a rat.

Panting, with his eyes gleaming murderously, Antonio made no resistance whatever for a moment.

Suddenly, however, he made a spring forward and Hewitt felt something cold and sharp just graze his coat—a machete, the Mexican dog! And, though he never knew how it happened and could never account for it, in the twinkling of an eye, that same machete was in his own grasp and he was thrusting it straight home to the heart of the would-be murderer.

There was only a sickening gurgle, a last dying oath and Antonio, in a limp, bleeding heap, fell dying on the floor. It was over so soon, and Hewitt, as he stared at the dead man, could not grasp what it meant—that he had really killed Antonio.

Concha had crouched, trembling and sobbing, watching it all with terror-stricken face. Now she moved and came forward weakly to Hewitt, throwing her arms round his heaving shoulders.

"You must go, my love," she whispered, brokenly. "It is dangerous—they will kill you. Then go—but quickly—run!"

She knew the danger, as Hewitt could not.

His first thought was to brave it out.

He had not meant to kill Antonio—he could get off free. But how could he prove it? Concha loved him—her testimony would not be taken! Besides, he, an Englishman, had killed a Mexican, and whether rightfully or not would never be considered.

As he began to realise what it meant, Hewitt shivered.

There would be no trial—no show whatever. A lynching party, or perhaps a stab in the dark. Because vengeance is of the Mexicans!

There was no time to lose if he meant going. Now, they were all drunk, as Concha whispered, and would know nothing. He would have time to escape. But in the morning it would be different. Oh, he must go—flee!

As they embraced for good-bye, Concha murmured, weeping, that she would always be faithful—waiting for him until he came. And wrought up to a high pitch, as he realised at last how the girl loved him, Hewitt swore that he would return. And then, with a last kiss, he went. And she knew that he would go back to his office in London.

Then Concha knelt down by the dead Antonio, wetting her skirt in the blood, because she had caught the sound of approaching footsteps—soon it would be known and Hewitt would be pursued, caught—killed! They should never take him—her beloved—first they should take her—her life, if need be!

It all came out as she had thought. Hewitt got safely out of the way, but she was tried and convicted for the murder of her cousin, Antonio. It means hanging, or a life sentence, generally, but in view of the circumstances, and her youth and heretofore perfect character, Concha got only twenty-five years in San Juan. She accepted gladly—for the Englishman. And before imprisonment, she was allowed to write Hewitt, telling him that she would love him always and would wait for him and marry him in twenty-five years.

She knew that no answer would come to her in San Juan, but she wanted to write him of her constancy. Hewitt, of course, would have understood had he received her letter, which being addressed simply to Senor Hewitt, Londres, Ingleterra, never reached him.

But Concha, believing that everybody in London, from the Prime Minister down to the train porters, must know her sweetheart, and would deliver her letter, went gladly to serve out her prison term, believing firmly that in twenty-five years he would come. And that is what has kept her alive—and sane! For that, however, few women die in San Juan, in spite of the yellow fever—more often they go mad.

Hewitt, in the meantime, his wild oats sown, has married his sweetheart (with money) and is a most exemplary husband.

At rare intervals he thinks of Santa Cruz and Concha and wonders what was her fate. Possibly married to some brute of a Mexican, he thinks, who beats and otherwise illtreats her. And, of course, she is fat and ungainly and has a moustache. That being the very last straw, he says pityingly, "Poor little Conchita" and promptly forgets all about her.

Meanwhile in the prison of San Juan de Ulloa, Concha waits.

A. MERIE.

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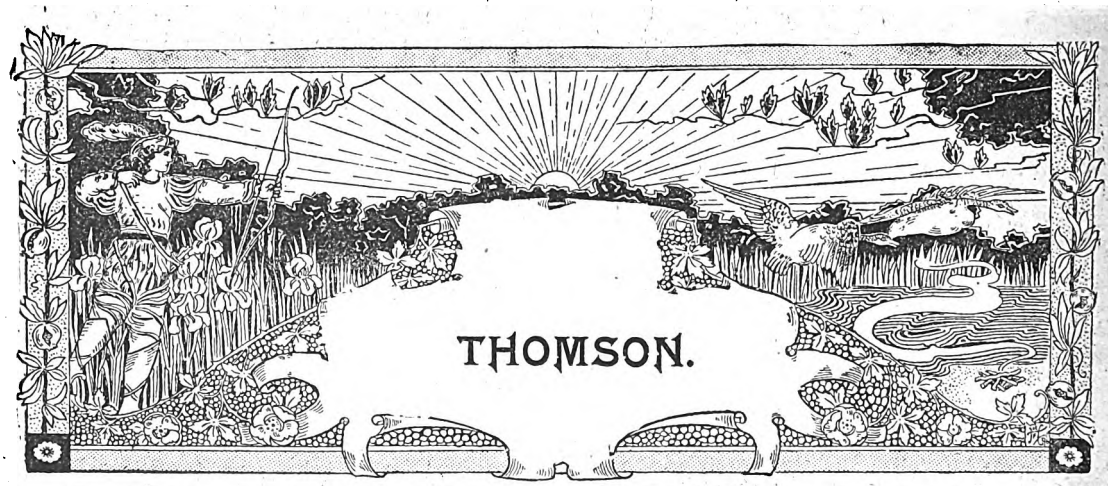

THOMSON.

YES, I liked that part of London and I should probably have called Mrs. Miller my landlady to this day had it not been for Thomson.

I never could conceive any valid reason why they thought so much of him; personally I simply loathed the wretch. Directly I saw him enter the room with those greenish eyes, which his black coat seemed to show up more brightly, I felt an almost unconquerable desire to throw a chair at him. I was only restrained from such an action by the knowledge that I didn't dare do it. I should have had all the ladies in the house on my unlucky head at one time.

It was a pleasant house in the extreme west of the metropolis; a large house, and there were many of us who enjoyed the hospitality of Mrs. Miller—by paying for it. It was convenient for me, as the train service to the City was very good and I had not the slightest desire to make any change. But I couldn't stand Thomson.

The landlady's paying guests—that's how she styled us—included more ladies than gentlemen, but that was rather an inducement to stay.

When we had dinner together in the evening it was much more agreeable than taking a meal at a restaurant in the City or alone in one's rooms, and I liked it.

I was occasionally bored by Mrs. Hedger, an elderly lady who was in a perpetual state of alarm lest there should be a fire, and sometimes Johnson, one of the gentlemen, insisted on becoming intimate enough to borrow five shillings, but these were details of little importance.

I usually quieted the lady by explaining in a learned manner that the attraction of gravity would operate in her favour in the event of a conflagration and she might rest assured that she would reach the ground very quickly; my reason for saying that was that she was very stout, but she did not comprehend it in that light, which was fortunate for me. Johnson, too, never failed to pay that five shillings; I didn't let him.

Mrs. Miller was an agreeable kind of woman and did her best to make everybody comfortable. She would now and then speak lengthily and confidentially about people who had resided with her previously; all very nice persons, they were, so she said in their manners, although in a few instances their morals had not been on the same level, for they had deceived her by their very geniality. She omitted to say whether she had deceived any of her guests in a similar fashion. Still, she acted honourably so far as I was concerned.

But the happiness of my stay in Mrs. Miller's desirable residence was marred by Thomson. I called him my pet aversion. I could not understand what the ladies saw in him, but they seemed to think that he was an incomparable creature. I made enquiries one day of Mrs. Hedger.

"Whatever can you see in Thomson to make you think so much of him?" I asked.

She looked at me in amazement and then replied:

"All the ladies like him!"

That was hardly an answer to my question, but I recognised that it was feminine logic.

"Do all the gentleman like him?" I questioned further.

"I think that is rather a foolish question, Mr. Blundell," she retorted. "We don't expect the gentlemen to share our views about Thomson."

I had to admit to myself that this last remark really was logical, and I changed the conversation.

There was no doubt that the ladies thought a great deal of Thomson, and he took advantage of it. I have seen him sitting on the couch by the side of Mrs. Mortimer and quite close to her. No other man in the establishment would have dared to try the same thing.

I remember once, when I felt in a particularly ecstatic frame of mind, venturing to take a seat near Miss Temple, a lady of about thirty summers, who had unconsciously succeeded in creating a tender feeling within my manly breast, but she quickly reminded me of what I was doing; and I may add that the tender feeling vanished from that moment.

But never a word was said to Thomson, yet I actually saw his face and Miss Temple's *very* close to one another. That is as much as I am prepared to swear to, but my own candid opinion is that she had kissed him.

And the way that wretch walked about the place! If he had been the proprietor of the establishment, he could not have put on more airs. Thomson was the only one in the place who could do as he liked.

I am sure that no one else would have ventured to sing in such a loud voice so late at night as Thomson did. But he seemed to think a great deal of his voice to judge by the way he used it. I made no hesitation inexpressing a preference for a railway engine whistle-

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Now, I may fairly claim to have led a quiet and respectable existence. I am out late sometimes, when I go to a theatre, but I never entered Mrs. Miller's palatial residence looking as though I had been in a brawl. Yet Thomson—well. I have seen him come in bearing indisputable signs of having taken a prominent part in a scrimmage. Was it tolerated? Why, I have seen them make even more fuss of him on those occasions!

I fancy that Thomson's character would not have borne a very strict investigation. I had serious doubts concerning his honesty, but I was never able to catch him in the act of purloining anything. I caught him once just outside my door, which was open; I would have given more than a little to kick him all the way down to the drawing-room, but prudence is the better part of valour.

Nothing in my room to steal? I flatter myself that I had made my room look vrey nice; I had a lot of knick-knacks about, and that bowl of gold fish was quite a set-off to the den.

I believe that my antipathy to Thomson was reciprocated, for the wretch always kept a wary eye upon me and looked as though he would like to spring at my throat. He would show his teeth and swear—yes, he indulged in very bad language, but in justice to him I must say that I never heard him swear in the presence of the ladies. That was not very surprising, seeing that they did their best to make him feel pleased with himself.

My desire to do some mischief to Thomson decided me to give notice; I felt that there would be trouble if one of us didn't go. But on the very day which I had fixed for making this important communication to my inestimable landlady, a Mrs. Gray and her daughter came to stay with us. One look at Violet Gray caused me to change my mind.

At the end of three days Violet and I were on the best of terms. She was a most charming young lady and our tastes were common in many respects, notably with reference to Thomson. She was the only woman in the house who didn't like him, and that made me love her all the more.

"I detest him!" she said to me vehemently. "What anyone can see to admire in him I cannot imagine. I wouldn't go near the brute for a gold church!"

I was so pleased with this remark that I was on the point of asking her then and there whether she would have any objection to going to an ordinary church with another brute—meaning myself, of course. If I had said that in the way—the way—oh, you know! She would have said that I was not to call myself a brute, as I was—and then it would have been all so lovely, and the only thing to be done was to ask mamma. But we were interrupted just at the critical moment. Thomson walked in, followed by Miss Temple. A month slipped by and Thomson brought about a catastrophe.

I occupied a room on the third floor and overlooking the garden, which was a fairly large one. The Grays had rooms on the first floor, also at the back, and they could step out on to a balcony.

One evening after we had retired, I was seated near the open window musing on things in general; it was a warm night, and I was not much inclined to sleep. I was awakened from my reverie with a start by catching the sound of Violet's voice and I arose from my chair and looked out of the window.

I did it very quietly, as I did not wish her to suppose that I was playing the spy, but I could not resist the temptation of having a last look at my Sweet Violet, which was my pet name for her.

I could see her on the balcony, leaning over as though trying to see someone in the garden. Then I was electrified by hearing her softly calling "Thomson."

I thought that my ears must have deceived me. She had expressed such aversion to Thomson only a short time previously.

I know that it is a woman's privilege to change her mind, but I don't think that Violet had any mind to change—I mean that I thought her aversion was too deep-rooted. But no, it was true, for she repeated the name.

I drew my head in and walked into the middle of the room in order to breathe aloud. What I breathed aloud is better left unsaid.

Then I went back to the window. Thomson was on the balcony with Violet Gray!

I paced up and down my room for quite half-an-hour, by which time Violet had withdrawn from the balcony and Thomson had vanished. I peered into the gloom of the garden in an endeavour to trace his presence, and after straining my eyes for a couple of minutes I saw his figure in the centre of a neatly-arranged plot.

A murderous desire seized me and I looked round for something heavy and hard. I remembered a sample glazed brick which a business colleague had thrust upon me with the remark that it would ornament my writing table or serve to pound some of Mrs. Miller's cake.

I remember placing it on my table that same evening and wondering why I had been so foolish as to burden myself with it. But the ways of fate are strange, and evidently fate had intended to provide me with something to wreak my vengeance upon Thomson.

It was just the thing, and as no one knew that I had it, there would be no fear of detection on that side.

I gently raised the sash a little higher and took good aim, then I launched the missile on its fell errand. A second later I heard a faint cry and I smiled grimly. That brick had been useful.

There was terrible consternation among the ladies the next morning.

Mrs. Hedger met me with a pocket handkerchief in her hand and tears in her eyes, and asked me if I had heard. She spoke as if there was only one dreadful thing that could occur.

Thomson she told me, had been the victim of a dastardly outrage; someone had thrown a brick at him and had injured him severely on the head. It was just a chance whether he would get over it.

Now that the thing was done I dreaded detection; otherwise I should undoubtedly have betrayed myself by exhibiting some indication of fiendish glee. But fear conquered the more pleasant sensation.

I had to pretend to be much upset by the intelligence, but I refused an invitation to go and look at the victim. I felt that I must keep away from them all as much as possible; I would have left the house for ever without the least delay, but that would have created suspicion.

I caught an earlier train than usual, and I was detained at the office that evening. A fortnight later I gave notice. I fancy they were not particularly sorry that I was going. Violet and I were very cool towards each other. Thomson was still alive.

Did Violet marry Thomson? Good gracious, no! Mrs. Miller had him stuffed when he died. Thomson was a cat. Whatever did you think he was? He was called Thomson to distinguish him from his father, Tom, a former pet of the house who disappeared one night and was never seen again. They may have spelt it Thomson but I don't think so.

D. J.

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A QUESTION OF HONOUR.

THE student world of Heidelberg at large desired particularly to learn why Karl von Lanenberg, a man known to have some of the best blood of Bavaria in his veins, so tamely endured the covert affronts repeatedly offered him by a disappointed rival in lecture room, restaurant and theatre. And when, covert affront passing into frank insult, Halm finally met Lanenberg's courteous "good morning" at the Cafe Muller with a sneer and an audible mutter of "Coward!" the smouldering fires of suspicion sprung at once into flame.

That small body of his fellow-students which still clung to belief in Lanenberg, the most brilliant student of his year, crowded round him with eager exclamations of "You must punish this!" "You will!" "You'll send him a challenge instantly!" "I'll carry it gladly." "And I." "And I—" a dozen voices clamoured at once.

"Gentlemen, my good friends," Lanenberg in the midst, spoke with white lips and dilated nostrils. "I am infinitely obliged to you. But I cannot avail myself, at present, of your kind services. My life, for the next year to come, is not my own."

The crowd fell back. On every face was consternation mingled with half-incredulous disgust.

"This passes belief!" Otto Mayer, an acknowledged leader among his fellows, muttered. "Have you a conscientious objection to duelling?"

"No."

"Is he mad or drunk, Rosenheim?" Poor Rosenheim shook his fair head ruefully. "Or—only afraid? Thunder and lightning, Lanenberg! Explain yourself, man!"

Lanenberg moistened his dry lips. "I have explained. This is a question of honour with me. If you are not satisfied——"

"Satisfied!" They caught up the word, and flung it to and fro to an accompaniment of derisive laughter. "Satisfied!"

Out of the Cafe Muller Karl von Lanenberg passed that day to social outer darkness. Thenceforward the sons of the university, which had been so proud of him, knew him no more. He walked the streets of Heidelberg an outcast, whom no man might salute by the way.

Rosenheim, indeed, perplexed but faithful, would have walked at his side, but Karl brusquely declined the boy's company.

"A bad reputation is contagious," he said. "You must think of your degree."

A few weeks taught Fritz the cogency of his reasoning. The university authorities were popularly supposed to ignore "student prejudices," but it was clear that they had no mind to support a lecturer whom his pupils considered socially "tabu."

They allowed it to become known that Lanenberg would not be reappointed to his present office.

"So be it! Who cares what they do—at the end of the year?" Lanenberg told himself, as he strode to the poor lodgings he shared with a widowed mother. Just on the doorstep he paused to give thanks that his mother went abroad so seldom. Only the needs of her little household drew her now and then from her hiding place.

Returning from one of these enforced expeditions into town, she descended upon her son with the stern inquiry:

"What is this I hear of a quarrel between you and some man called Halm? Have you forgotten your pledge?"

Karl raised a haggard face from his papers.

"No, I have not forgotten."

"Till that pledge is redeemed," the mother continued, almost fiercely, her thin cheeks flushing, her tall figure trembling with suppressed passion, "you have no right to run any risks."

"Make your mind easy, mother. I run no risks till my task is done."

He continued to work hard—as hack, translator, law-copyist—so hard that any woman not absorbed in one fixed idea would surely have cried out upon him for killing himself. He did not die, however; the Lanenbergs are a sturdy race. Denying himself food and sleep, going forth every morning to the endurance of insults he might not resent, this latter-day descendant of the Teutonic knights won his way through those nine terrible months, and could announce his task "done" at their close. Frau von Lanenberg sat down and wept. "Thank God! your brother's a free man at last," she sobbed.

"And—so am I," was Karl's significant rejoinder. "Therefore I'll go round and see Rosenheim."

He went; four hours later Rosenheim returned the visit. Bursting impetuously into his friend's little working room, he cried, in a lamentable voice:

"It's no use, old chap. He utterly declines to meet you—won't even read your challenge. Mayer and the rest support him. Oh, I beg pardon! I didn't see—"

What Rosenheim had failed to see was a tall and strikingly handsome young man in guardsman's uniform, who, emerging from a cloud of tobacco smoke, said briefly·

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"Introduce me." Whereupon Karl muttered thickly:

"My brother Berthold; you've heard of Fritz Rosenheim?"

"Assuredly, and I'll be much obliged to him if he'll kindly explain the significance of the extraordinary message he brings you."

Rosenheim, with many falterings, explained and Berthold von Lanenberg listened, his face growing gray like that of a man under sharp physical torture.

At length he sprang up.

"Take me to these fellows; I'll make them hear reason."

"No, Karl," shaking off his brother, who would have interposed, "this is my affair. I claim to act—if only as the head of the family."

Young Fritz spent the next ten minutes protesting his unshaken faith in Karl. But Berthold von Lanenberg spoke not a word until he had entered the room where Gottfried Halm sat smoking with a dozen of his peers. Then, having formally presented himself, he begged to know Herr Halm's grounds for declining his brother's challenge.

Halm leaned back supercilliously in his chair. "The challenge, Herr Lieutenant, was long on the way."

"Yes!" Berthold thundered. "Do you know why it tarried? I will tell you."

All faces turned eagerly to the pale speaker.

"The tale's a short one. I am a poor man condemned to associate with rich men. Like other poor men similarly circumstanced, I got into difficulties, I committed an act which once known must have ended my career."

A pause. Berthold took breath and went on deliberately.

"The person wronged by that act, a distant relative of my own, speedily discovered that he had been defrauded. He offered not to publish his discovery on one condition—that the money should be repaid him within two years. My brother, aware that I was powerless to accept this condition (a soldier has no opportunity of earning money) came forward and accepted it in my name. He succeeded in fulfilling it—yesterday."

A slight movement among the listening group.

"To gain this success he has sacrificed everything he holds dearest.

"Rather than run any risk of breaking his word, he, a Lanenberg, has suffered men to call him—coward!"

There the apologist's voice broke suddenly and Gottfried Halm sprang to his feet.

"No man shall ever call him so again in my hearing!" he cried. "I'm ready to ask his pardon."

"We shall all crave leave to do that," Otto Mayer put in. "And then—to thank his brother for telling us a story which we have (I speak for every one present) always forgotten. It seems, sir," he added, turning with a courteous inclination to Berthold, "that courage of the highest kind is common in your family."

G. J. JOHNSON.

A WORD TO THE

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A WORD TO THE

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THE SEA'S RESTITUTION.

The third day out from Havre a fog came up and made the world opaque. For two days it did not lift nor thin, and it was difficult to believe, in spite of the log, that the ship was making any headway at all. It seemed almost as if the world had ceased to be, or as if it existed but in a state of flux, and as if we, enchanted ones, accursed with an immunity from the common destruction, were left to contemplate the nothingness.

Then, to add to our sense of doom, a young baby was said to have died on shipboard.

At first, everyone took it for granted that its mother must have been a steerage, or, at the least, a second cabin passenger. It seemed unlikely that death would be so impertinent as to enter the first cabin.

But it was learned that the destroyer had been even more insolent than that—it had taken a child much favoured of fortune, the heir to great wealth.

I went to visit Mrs. Morell, the child's mother. She was tall and white, with wide eyes, which must have been beautiful when she was happy. Now a sort of blankness, like that of the air and the sea, had come into them.

I could not see her soul for her sorrow. She offered no confidence; indeed, my sympathy could not reach to her dulled senses. Her grief was between us, impenetrable as the fog through which the ship crept cautiously.

"The Captain asked me if I would be willing to have my baby buried at sea," she said to me, in a voice which reminded me of a mournful bell, "and I told him I had no objection whatever."

"No?" I ejaculated in amazed surprise.

"Nothing is more peaceful than the deeps of the sea," she responded, and it being night, she asked me to walk upon the deck with her under cover of the darkness.

More in sympathy than from curiosity I inquired:

"Your husband is awaiting you in America?"

"Yes," she replied, her voice strangely colourless. "He will be on the landing-stage. He will expect to see the baby in my arms. He has never seen the baby, you know. I have been with my mother, who lives in Paris, and the day that baby was three months old I started for the States."

We paused by the bulwark, and she looked down into the shadowy trough of the wave.

"It will make a soft cradle," she said.

Her courage wrung my heart.

"Where do you find the strength to endure such a grief?" I cried.

"Indeed," she responded, with the mournful shadow of a smile, "that I cannot tell. It does not seem as if it were really I who has met with this great misfortune. If it were I whose plans have been so altered and whose hopes have been so dashed, surely I would not be tearless like this. It is Adele, my nurse, who weeps."

The next morning the Captain read the burial service with solemn accent, and into the colourless sea, through the white vacancy of the fog, the little one was lowered reverently.

I stood beside the mother, and I would have sustained her with my arm, but that she gently repulsed me. She swayed a little from side to side, but there were no tears on the face that looked out of the quaint pointed hood of her sea cloak.

She stared ahead of her, at the stupid fog—she looked, baffled, into obscurity.

Suddenly, an hour after the funeral, the mist lifted. It rolled up as a curtain rolls up, and it was a saffron colour, gleaming and splendid.

When it had lifted a sparkling sea was revealed and a cloudless sky. The world became radiant. It seemed to exult in its beauty. Mrs. Morrell cast a look of reproach at this vaunting of nature's youth and joy and went to her cabin.

Though the day messages were sent her and delicate evidences of sympathy, but her maid alone returned thanks.

The next morning found her still in seclusion. More than one of us thought of invading that sacred solititude, but at last forebore.

It was the afternoon of that day that the man on the bridge espied an object upon the horizon at the south. It was a black speck visible in a short time to all of us.

"It's a ship's long boat," was the verdict at last. "It is manned and flying a flag of distress."

The course of our ship was changed. We went racing through the green water, rejoicing in the zest of the hour—in the action, the event.

Presently we were standing off cautiously from a long boat manned with haggard men.

"Who are you?" shouted the Captain, as the companon ladder was being lowered.

"All that is left of the crew and passengers of the *Nina Celeste*, sir."

"How lost?"

"By fire, sir, two nights ago. The first boat lowered capsized. The women—there were two—were lowered into it. But the men were frightened, the flames made such headway, so they jumped. We are all who remain. Three of us were picked up from the overturned boat. But the others were dragged down in the swirl of the boat—it got to going round and round."

"What was the *Nina Celeste?*"

"A freighter, sir, bound from Bermuda to New York, carrying a cargo of lilies and hemp. It was out of its course owing to a fog."

The boat's load came on board—fifteen pale men—and one of them carried something in his arms.

"What have you got there?" asked the Captain. "Is it a child?"

"Yes, sir. It is the babe of one of the women who was lost. I was just about to hand it down to her——"

There was a sharp cry from among the crowd of passengers. Mrs. Morell was coming forward, her arms outstretched. She was entirely unconscious of the crowd, apparently. Someone whispered to the man who held the babe:

"Her little one was buried yesterday at sea."

The man shuffled his burden awkwardly in his arms and took his hat from his head. Mrs. Morell reached him, and her hands seemed to hover above the coverings of the child's face, as an avid bee hovers above a flower.

"It is alive!" she half-whispered, after she had bent above it all trembling. "It is breathing!" It seemed as if she thought that fact a sort of miracle.

She lifted the babe eagerly from the man's arms, and straining it close to her, walked with rapid, uncertain steps toward her cabin, and, as she went, she, who had hitherto shed no tears, sobbed aloud.

C. T. H.

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CHIVERS'

DELICIOUS! WHOLESOME! REFRESHING!

FLAVOURED WITH RIPE FRUIT JUICES.

THE LANCET: "An excellent Jelly, possessing a flavour of quite a natural character."

SISTER EVA, Authoress of "Scenes in the Life of a Nurse": "Your Jellies are quite the nicest I have tasted. They deserve to be more widely used in the sick-room."

PROF. GOODFELLOW, F.R.M.S.: "Perfectly pure, and of the highest excellence."

FREE SAMPLE on receipt of post-card. S. CHIVERS and SONS, Histon, Cambridge.

JELLIES.

SILVER QUEEN CYCLES.

IMMENSE STOCK. New and secondhand, FROM 10s. MONTHLY. Carriage paid. Free wheels and rim brakes. **Illustrated Price Lists Post Free.**—THE SILVER QUEEN CYCLE Co. Ltd., 221 Tottenham Court Rd, London, W

NOSE

MACHINES. LEES RAY. S. S. Dept., South Castle St, Liverpool, is a specialist on Ugly and Red Noses. Send stamp for particulars of his patent scientific Nose Improvers. Red Nose Cure, medically approved, 3/9. Outstanding Ear Machines 11/6.

A FREE GIFT.

500 40-EGG INCUBATORS.

READ CAREFULLY AND WRITE AT ONCE.

MILLIONS of money leave this country every year for poultry and eggs that could easily be produced here at enormous profit. TO AMATEURS ONLY.—To encourage this industry we will Give Away **500** of our 20th Century Incubators Free of Charge, trusting that the profitable results obtained on a small scale will induce our clients to purchase our 100-Egg Incubators, and make a good living from poultry breeding.—Address MANAGER, Room X4, POULTRY BREEDERS' APPLIANCE COMPANY, 3 CLARENCE ROAD, SOUTHEND-ON-SEA.

TOO STOUT

I was for years; by chance I came across a simple home remedy that reduced me from 17st. to 10st. 12lb., and I will willingly send particulars **free** to any sufferer enclosing stamp. Mrs. L. E. FELL, 195 Oxford Street, London W.

SULPHOLINE LOTION,

For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

SHILLING BOTTLES.

A SUM of from 12s. to 25s. per week can be earned in spare hours or evenings by either sex everywhere.—Send addressed envelope for particulars to Box 24, Eclipse Works, 89 Aldersgate Street, E.C.

HAIR DESTROYED.

Send me an envelope (stamped and addressed) and I will tell you how to remove all superfluous hair **free of charge.** (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Miss E. V. (Room 3), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

IMPORTANT TO WEAK MEN

And those suffering from nervous exhaustion, loss of vigour, Varicocele, &c., can be successfully and permanently cured without operation or detention from business by THE DR. COLLINS most improved and rational method medical science has ever yet produced.

Particulars and proofs of successful cures sent free on receipt of address.

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Gothic House, 9 Erskine Street, Liverpool.

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BEST OF ALL BEVERAGES
AND THE
CHEAPEST.

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IT'S
MASON'S
Extract of Herbs

8 Gallons Prime Beer for 6d.

Sample Free for 9 Stamps.
AGENTS WANTED EVERYWHERE.

NEWBALL & MASON,
NOTTINGHAM.

KOKO

UNDER ROYAL PATRONAGE.

OLD PEOPLE LIKE IT
for its wonderful power to *invigorate decayed hair*, and induce an entire new growth when that is possible.

MIDDLE-AGED PEOPLE LIKE IT,
because it *prevents them from getting bald*, keeps dandriff away, and makes the hair grow thick and strong.

YOUNG LADIES LIKE IT
As a dressing, because it gives the hair a *beautiful glossy lustre*, ensures a *luxuriant growth*, and enables them to dress it and keep it in any style that may be desired.

CHILDREN LIKE IT,
Because it keeps the hair and scalp cool and clean, *allays irritation*, and keeps the hair in whatever position desired.

KOKO for the HAIR is a tonic, cleansing, invigorating preparation, it eradicates scurf and dandriff, prevents hair from falling or turning grey, promotes growth, contains no dye or greasy substance, is the most cleanly of all hair preparations and invariably gives satisfaction.

THEY ALL LIKE IT
Because it is as *pure as crystal*, perfectly colourless, contains no poisonous substance, no sugar of lead, sulphur, nitrate of silver, or grease, and does not soil or colour *the scalp, face, or the most delicate fabric in clothing.*

1/-, 2/6, and 4/6, of all Chemists, Hairdressers, &c., everywhere.

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The Brain Gymnasium

In these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, Short Stories, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by first post on Monday, June 25th, 1900.

Readers are invited to submit puzzles, acrostics, conundrums, word-squares, etc., for publication on this page. A gold-plated pencil case will be given to each reader whose attempts are used. All attempts must be vouched for as original, and, of course, it is distinctly understood that the sender of a puzzle must neither compete in the competition nor divulge to anyone the solution.

Any reader found infringing this rule will be severely dealt with.

No. 142.

Prove that seven is the half of twelve.

No. 143.

The following letters duly arranged will form a well-known proverb:

AA C EEE FF HH IIII M N OOO P RR SS TTTTT

No. 144.

Place the nine digits in three rows in such a way that, by adding them together, up, down, across, or diagonally, they shall always make fifteen.

No. 145.

A box has nine ears of corn in it. A squirrel carries out three ears a day, and it takes him nine days to carry the corn all out. How is this explained?

No. 146.

Take away my last seven letters and I am a useful article. Without my first six I am an article of commerce. Minus my last four I am a desirable thing. Without my first seven I am a portion of the body. My whole is an important branch of education.

No. 147.

My initials, read downwards, will form the name of one of Shakespeare's characters:

A GIRL'S NAME. A FRUIT. A FISH. A TOWN IN SCOTLAND. A FAMOUS EXPLORER. A COUNTRY IN ASIA. A FLOWER. A PRECIOUS STONE.

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Nos. 118 to 123.

The prize of £2 has been awarded this week to Mr. Edward Fitzgerald, 7 Tuckey Street, Cork, whose solution was the first correct one dealt with.

Each of the following have been awarded a copy of "Hagar of Homerton," by H. E. Dudeney:

Miss A. Wilson, Governor's House, Dorchester.
G. W. Hurst, 2 Claremount Terrace, Hextable, Kent.
C. Cavill, 25 Gladys Street, Lightbowne Road, Moston, Manchester.
A. Mallinson, Tindal Villas, Brentwood Road, Romford.
Miss Gertrude Moir, Wycar House, Bedale, Yorkshire.
W. E. Griffiths, 30 Spital Square, E.
J. B. Johnson, Technical Institute, Crewe.
P. Mepham, 109 High Street, New Brompton.
Miss Peggy Cadden, 11 New City Road, Glasgow.
E. J. Bloom, 90 Warham Road, Harringay, N.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES.

Nos. 124 to 129.

No. 124. 792.

No. 125.

S T E A L
E A G L E
A N G L E

No. 126. The host would supply 5040 dinners at half-a-crown and would consequently lose £490.

No. 127.

M e A t
D r A m
G o A t
S a C k
A c R e

MADAGASCAR.

No. 128. "He who loses money loses much; he who loses a friend loses more; but he who loses his spirits loses all."

No. 129. Ascension Island.

A BOOK FOR THE HOME.

THE DOMESTIC BLUNDERS OF WOMEN

By "A Mere Man." With Sketches by "Yorick." Crown 8vo. Cloth, price 3s. 6d.

"'A Mere Man' strikes hard at women's foibles, and at the same time sees his own in a lesser degree. It is a most amusing recital of every day domestic relationship, and should be read by all men about to enter into the 'holy bonds.'"—*Public Opinion.*

"Bold, unsparing, comprehensive, and it raises questions of absorbing interest to both men and women . . . . his criticisms show penetration and sagacity."—*Hearth and Home.*

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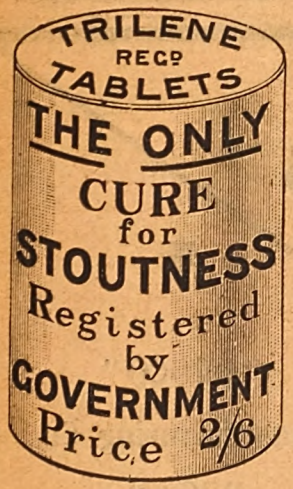
ALL FAT PEOPLE

Can be **CURED** by taking

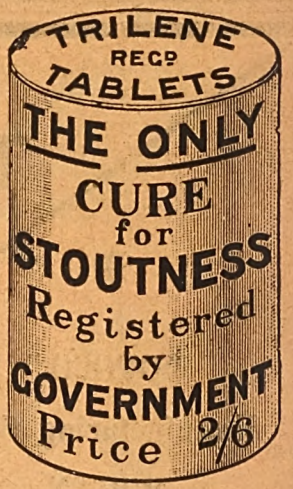
TRILENE TABLETS Regd.



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

Send **2s. 6d.** to THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

Mrs. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

Miss CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st. and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 21lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me. "Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Riseholme Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

Mrs. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44, Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

Mr. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs, says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mrs E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 21. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver nr Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 62 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

Miss F. L. BALL, 47 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol, writes: "I am quite cured through your Tablets. They improve the figure, and greatly relieve shortness of breath."

Miss PATIENT, of Woodberry, Tilehydon Bois: "Feel great benefit from Tablets. I have lost 2½, and am sufficiently reduced."

Mrs. DREW, of 1 Bellevue Gardens, The Nursery, Devizes, writes: "I took Tablets some years ago; they soon reduced me and I have not got it out since. Send me a box for my mother."

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QUALITY.

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"OROCO" TABLE MATS

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AN ELEGANT TABLE DECORATION. A PERFECT PROTECTION FROM HOT DIS HES & PLATES.

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10 FOR ONE SHILLING POST FREE.

"OROCO" Manufacturing Co., WIGAN.

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Keep the feet dry and prevent fatigue.

18 PAIRS for 1s.

Reckitt's PARIS Blue.

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TAKE ME WITH YOU.

SHORT STORIES

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN

No. 599. FOR WEEK ENDING JUNE 23RD, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

How Indigestion Becomes Chronic.

Many people neglect attention to their Digestive Functions until they find them inflicting Pain and Discomfort, and then resort is had to drugs that in the end make matters chronic and more troublesome, simply because the action of such drugs is contrary to the acts and methods of Nature.

But if Guy's Tonic is resorted to, either to prevent or to cure any disorder of Digestion or Assimilation, then great Benefit invariably results, because the lines of cure and restoration followed are the same as the paths of Nature herself. Hence Guy's Tonic always does good, and commences to do it quickly.

If there is Indigestion before the Food is absorbed into the Blood, there is lack of Strength and Vigour in the Blood, and the System is partly starved; besides which the decaying Food expands and causes Wind, Heartburn, Nausea, Biliousness, Headache, etc. Guy's Tonic ensures the Digestion of Food prior to absorption, and the symptoms of pain have no longer any reason for their existence, and of course depart.

If there is failure of Re-digestion or Assimilation, then the Nervous System suffers and the vitality of the Body is decreased, leading to Paleness, Anæmic tendencies, Nervous Disorders, and Prostrating Pains. Happily, Guy's Tonic is as beneficial for Re-digestion as for Digestion itself, hence Assimilation is promoted and Vitality is increased by taking Guy's Tonic, thanks to its Restorative and Tonic powers.

Mr. A. G. WELHAM, of Union Street, Aldershot, writes:

"I have been taking Guy's Tonic and have derived "great Benefit therefrom. I can eat almost anything "now with impunity, without any of the former Dis- "comfort. I frequently recommend Guy's Tonic because "I believe it accomplishes all that is claimed for it."

Mr. G. RICHARDSON, of 8 Collingham Row, Queen's Road, Newark-on-Trent, writes:

"I have derived much Benefit from the use of four "bottles of Guy's Tonic after suffering from Nervous "Dyspepsia for over twelve months. Needless to say, if I "have a recurrence of the trouble I shall fly to your "valuable Tonic again."

A new size (Six Ounce) Bottle of Guy's Tonic, price 1s. 1½d., is now on Sale at all Chemists and Stores.

Allen Foster & Co.

THE LONDON MANUFACTURERS

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Ladies' White Pique Coat and Skirt Costumes in the Reefer and Chesterfield Designs. Price complete. **8/11.** Carriage, 6d. Or Skirt alone, **4/6.** Carriage, 5d. extra. Splendid Value.

LADIES' PLAIN & FANCY

BLACK ALPACA SKIRTS.

From **6/6** each.

Carriage, 5d.

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10/6

Design No. 256. 10/6.

LADIES' CHESTERFIELD COAT AND SKIRT, cut in the latest shape, and made in all the shades of **Allen Foster & Co.'s Venetian Cloth**, or in their **Specialite Serge**—two splendid wearing fabrics. The Coat can be worn open or closed. The Skirt is cut full, with inverted pleat at back. Price only **10/6**; carriage paid, 6d. extra. The Coat can be lined with Mercerised Striped Italian for 3/6 extra; and Skirt lined with good linenette for 2/6 extra. This Costume in the New Melton Coating will be **17/6.**

Design No. 257. 10/6.

An attractive Costume, with a tight-fitting bodice, full pleated front, with pretty lappels, trimmed with two rows of bead gimp, collar and sleeves being trimmed to match. Made in our Specialite Serge and in the smooth-faced Venetian Cloth. All colours, price only **10/6**, carriage paid, 6d. extra. Satisfaction guaranteed. Skirt can be lined good linenette, 2/6 extra.

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WHY BE FAT?

When a lady, who has discovered a simple means of Self-Cure will be happy to send particulars of same to any sufferer from this distressing complaint. Free on receipt of stamped addressed envelope. ADDRESS:

Mrs. TREVOR WELLS,

63 *HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON, W.C.*

ALL FAT PEOPLE

can safely **Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

Send 2s. 6d. to **THE TRILENE CO.**, Sole Proprietors, **66 Finsbury Pavement, London.**

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 28lb., and I am cured." Mrs. Darnley-Smith, of Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, says: "Tablets have reduced me very much." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Comston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

The Only Efficacious Substitute for Cod-liver Oil.

DEVONSHIRE CREAM.—(Really Genuine). In Patent Air-tight tins. ½lb., 1/4; 1lb., 2/4; 2lb., 4/-, including tin and postage.—MRS. CONYERS, MORCHARD BISHOP, DEVON.

A SUM of from 12s. to 25s. per week can be earned in spare hours or evenings by either sex everywhere.—Send addressed envelope for particulars to Box 24, Eclipse Works, 89 Aldersgate Street, E.C.

HAIR DESTROYED.

Send me an envelope (stamped and addressed) and I will tell you how to remove all superfluous hair **free of charge.** (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Miss E. V. (Room 3), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

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METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS CO. Ltd.

Juno Cycle School & Works, 75, 76, Bishopsgate Street, Without, E.C., and Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

VARICOCELE.

Every man suffering from Varicocele and the allied troubles, should send for treatise, describing their Causes, Symptoms, Results, and Successful and Painless Treatment without surgical operation or the use of cumbersome trusses and electrical appliances. Will be sent sealed, post free, three stamps.

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DON'T LET MOTHS RUIN YOUR FURS OR BLANKETS

KEATING'S POWDER PRESERVES THEM.

KILLS BLACKBEETLES & FLEAS

Tins 3d., 6d. & 1/-

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BEST OF ALL BEVERAGES

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CHEAPEST.

GOOD! IT'S MASON'S

Extract of Herbs

8 Gallons Prime Beer for 6d.

Sample Free for 9 Stamps.

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THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

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MAYPOLE SOAP

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COTTONS & in fact EVERYTHING

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SHORT STORIES

No. 599.] [PRICE ONE PENNY.

For the Week Ending June 23rd, 1900.

OLD MEEK.

WE always called him Meek Adams, but that was not his name, of course. He was christened John Adams, and on his bill heads he was set down as J. Adams, which was his usual signature. But it certainly never entered into the head of any inhabitant of our village to call him anything but Meek Adams, and even that was usually turned into "Old Meek."

He was not a native of the village; people said that he had settled in Winsted many years ago and had bought the good-will of the general shop in the "Street," and that was all they knew about him. He was a man of some refinement and had always been most anxious to oblige his neighbours and friends; in course of time he had carried this desire to please and to assist to such a point that it seemed almost incredible that he could ever muster up courage enough to refuse. He grew really timid, and it was this characteristic which finally earned for him the nickname of "Meek."

Meek's shop was of somewhat peculiar construction, and at the back there were two parlours instead of the usual one; the smaller was his own private apartment, but the larger had gradually come to be used as a general room for visitors, and the men of the village often took advantage of the accommodation.

What made Meek turn his larger parlour into a social room for the village it was not easy to understand; all we could say was that he was a peculiar old man and that this was one of his peculiarities.

One thing that puzzled us about the old man was that although he unquestionably did a thriving business, he always seemed to be short of money. Not that he ever kept people waiting for payment of their bills, except on very rare occasions, but many little things proved to us that he had no spare cash.

The other tradesmen of the place had banking accounts at a neighbouring town, but when Meek had to send payment to a distant merchant he had to purchase a money order. And he never kept up any appearance, as other people would have done; he was always neat in dress, but there was no disguising the fact that his clothes were usually threadbare and that new suits were for him something like angel's visits—few and far between.

What did Old Meek do with his money? Did he invest his profits—in short, was he a miser? That

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seemed the most probable explanation of his impecuniosity, yet we had to admit that it was decidedly not in accordance with the old man's willingness to assist others. For his assistance was not limited to small acts of kindness which cost nothing, but was often of the most practical kind. Many and many a time we had known him to give money or food from his shop to the poorer people of the community, and whenever there was a Sunday school treat, the organisers could depend upon receiving donations of bread, butter, cake and jam from the shop of John Adams.

Some of us knew for a fact that he had lent money to people in difficulties, but to such a pitch had grown his fear of offending people and seeming to be disobliging, that he never asked for the money if the borrowers suffered from lapses of memory. What, then, became of the money?

One of the most prominent personages in our little community was Jim Hendy; he was prominent by reason of his disagreeable, rather than by his agreeable, qualities.

He was a man about thirty; his father—about whom the less said the better—had died when Jim was five years old, and his mother — the very antithesis of her husband—had died two years later. The boy had been sent to school and had received a fair education by means of money left at his mother's death; and when he was taken from school and apprenticed to the village carpenter, it was on the understanding that he would in due course become a partner or buy up the business. The latter contingency had occurred.

But Jim Hendy was hardly the man to make a successful business of carpentering, or, indeed, of any other trade. He could not be depended upon to complete a job within the specified time, and if he had not lost his connection it was by good luck rather than by good management.

He spent his money as fast as it came to him, and when he had to provide materials he found it necessary either to ask for a sum on account or to borrow.

The inhabitants of Winsted shook their heads over Jim Hendy; he spent more than he earned, and it was currently rumoured that Old Meek had financed him more than once.

"Could you lend me ten pounds for about a fortnight?"

But that was only rumour, for no one could say anything definite about it.

Colour was, however, lent to the statement by the fact that Old Meek seemed to have an especial liking for Jim Hendy.

This was certainly a peculiar feature in the old man's character; he was upright and respectable in the extreme, which remark could not be applied to Hendy, and it was a matter of surprise to all of us that the old man should show such partiality for a man who at times came near to deserving the title of reprobate.

One day we received an explanation of the fact of Jim spending more than we believed it possible for him to earn; he announced that he intended to go to a solicitor in the market town and see if it where possible to realise the securities purchased by the money left by his mother, the dividends of which he received at certain intervals.

He went, but when he returned he was very sullen and said that he could get nothing out of the lawyer — that the money was tied up in such a way that he could only receive a certain amount each quarter. The only concession that he could obtain was a promise to inquire whether the payments could be made monthly, and later on he received an intimation that this would be done.

"I suppose your mother had some money in her own right," said Mr. Rigsby, the harness maker, to Jim Hendy, for I know that your father hadn't any to leave."

"I suppose so," replied Hendy gruffly, not appreciating the words of his neighbour. "Her father had money, so I believe, but he wouldn't have anything to do with her after her marriage."

One summer evening Old Meek went to his neighbour Rigsby and, after a few general remarks uttered in his usual timid manner, drew quite close to the harness maker and said:

"Could you lend me ten pounds for about a fortnight, Mr. Rigsby? I have a bill to pay to-morrow, and I have only one pound of the money."

Rigsby was a kind-hearted man, but this gave him the opening for which he and many of the people of Winsted had been waiting—it gave him the opportunity to touch upon the question of what Meek did with his money.

Rigsby could not resist the temptation.

"Now, Meek, how is it that you haven't enough to meet that bill? I don't want to know your business, but it seems strange that you shouldn't have a few pounds by you when you have been doing a good business all these years. I'll lend you the money, but——"

"I have calls upon my purse which nobody knows about," replied Old Meek hesitatingly, when he had recovered from the surprise occasioned by the question.

"I'll pay you back before a fortnight, perhaps," he continued, growing again confused.

"You see, it's—that is—I mean I had to lend some myself, Rigsby."

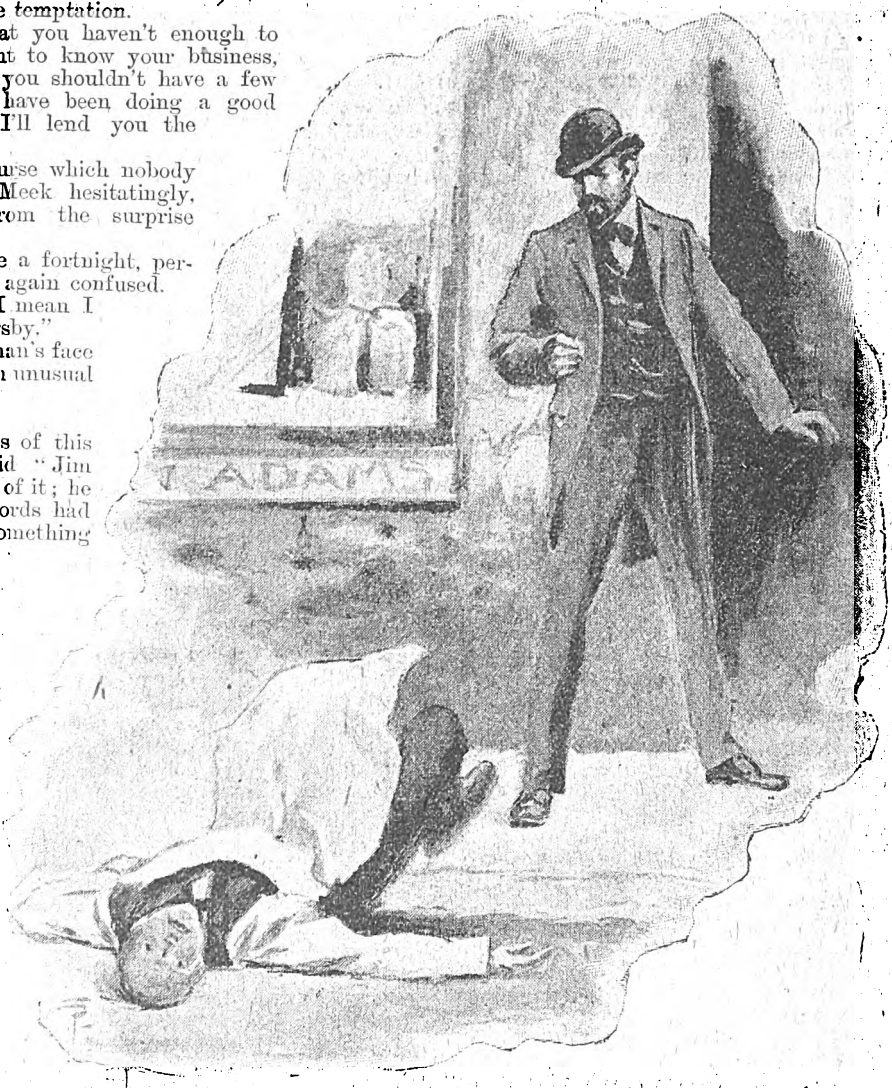
Rigsby scanned the old man's face narrowly and then asked, with unusual bluntness:—

"Who to?"

Startled by the abruptness of this last inquiry, Old Meek said "Jim Hendy" before he was aware of it; he coloured immediately the words had left his lips and muttered something inaudible, but Rigsby cut him short.

"Look here, Meek," Rigsby went on somewhat more sternly than was his wont. "That fellow has too much to do with it already; if he didn't have that money coming in every month, he would be a better man, because he would have to work harder for a living and then he would keep that business together properly instead of letting it go to rack and ruin. You are doing him harm, not good, by encouraging him in his laziness. When did he have that money of you?"

"Yesterday. But I think you are rather hard on him," ventured Meek timidly. "I don't think he is as bad as you make out, and he'll pay me that little loan when he can, I am sure. I wouldn't say anything more against him, Rigsby, if I were you; I really wouldn't."



Meek fell violently to the ground.

"Here is the money," said the harness maker, after paying a visit to an inner room. "You're quite welcome to it for a month if you need it, but I'll talk to Hendy and make him repay that loan to you."

"No, you mustn't—you really mustn't!" cried Old Meek in a frenzy of alarm. "You see it is only between us two and it isn't fair to make it known. You promise me that you won't say anything to him about it—you will promise, won't you?"

The old man was in such a state of excitement that Rigsby pitied him and gave the promise. But when Meek Adams had left his shop, the harness maker repented having given his word, and began to persuade himself that he was not bound by his promise, seeing that what he was inclined to do was in the interest of fairness, and was simply an act of justice to the too confiding and benevolent man.

Rigsby saw Hendy that evening at the end of the street, near the green; the carpenter had evidently imbibed rather more than was good for him although he was still a long way off intoxication, and the harness maker's indignation rose at the thought that Old Meek's money had been put to such a use.

"Hendy, when do you intend to pay back that money you borrowed yesterday of Meek Adams?" queried Rigsby, hardly able to contain his wrath.

"When I choose," growled the carpenter angrily. "So he has been boasting about lending me a pound or two when I wanted the money to buy wood with, eh? The old idiot! I'll talk to him about that!"

"He hasn't been boasting at all," returned Rigsby, feeling half sorry that he had not kept his promise to Adams.

"I heard of it accidentally and I thought you ought

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to know that he wants the money himself very badly to pay a bill. He's a good old man and you ought to make haste and pay him back."

Jim Hendy merely growled again and passed on; but he was angry that Meek should have told anyone about the little transaction, and his wrath increased as he brooded over the fact that he would not now have so good a chance of forgetting to return the money lent to him.

Three hours later, as he walked down the street towards the general shop, his heart was so full of animosity towards the old man that he determined to enter the shop and "have it out with him." But as he reached the window, Meek came outside to see whether the contents were well displayed.

"What did you tell old Rigsby that I had some money of you for?" inquired Hendy with a muttered oath. He stepped up to the old man and shook his clenched fist in his face, causing Meek to shrink back.

"Suppose I did ask you for a loan, you needn't tell all the village about it."

"I only told Rigsby, and that was by accident," protested Meek. "He ought not to have said anything about it; he promised me he wouldn't."

"You should have kept your mouth shut altogether!" snarled Hendy. "You old miser, you deserve to lose your money, putting it away in the bank and never doing anything with it! Now look here! I'm not going to pay that money, just to serve you out for chattering about it, and if you say another word I'll give you a taste of this!" And once more he shook his clenched fist in Old Meek's face.

Jackson, the cab proprietor, who saw the incident, told us afterwards that he couldn't describe exactly what took place; he couldn't tell whether Hendy actually struck the old man or whether Meek Adams stepped back to avoid a blow and tripped over the stone flag outside the door. All that could be said was that Meek fell violently to the ground, the back of his head striking the cobbles with great force.

Meek Adams was carried inside and placed on his bed by friendly hands, and the doctor was hurriedly sent for. But the blow was too severe, and it soon became known that the good old man's life was ebbing away. They restored him to consciousness, and the first thing he did was to ask for Jim Hendy.

"Tell the others to go out, Jim," he murmured feebly, the words coming at intervals. "I want to speak to you alone."

The others respected Old Meek's request and withdrew, wondering what could be the nature of the communication. They learnt afterwards from Jim Hendy himself.

"I am dying, my boy," said the old man, "and I want to explain it all."

Meek Adams' voice grew stronger, and it seemed that by an effort of the will, he had summoned up strength enough to speak with comparative ease. "You can have that money—you are as welcome to that as to all the other money I have given to you or spent on you. I am sorry that I cannot leave you any more, but you have had it all, Jim."

He ceased speaking, and Jim Hendy looked at him with widening eyes, he had borrowed money occasionally from the old man, but these words hinted at something more.

"I loved your mother once, Jim, when she was in London, but she preferred your father. I was much older than she was, and I suppose it was natural. When I heard of your father's death, I came down here and took the shop so as to be near her—I thought she might learn to like me in time; but she died. She left you without a penny, and I went to the lawyers and made arrangements to have you sent to school at my expense. You were treated as one of the schoolmaster's family, for you were only a child.

"It was rumoured that your mother had left some money invested, and I thought it well to let people believe it. But I paid the fees, I scraped together enough to apprentice you and buy the business, and I have paid the annuity ever since—the money you receive every month, Jim. There is no money invested, and my only regret is that the payments will stop when I am dead."

* * * * *

There was some talk of having Jim Hendy arrested on a charge of manslaughter, but the village policeman pointed out that the evidence was not sufficient. Popular indignation subsided rather more quickly than might have been anticipated, but this was largely due to the changed manner of Jim Hendy himself.

He told the story of the old man's benevolence and the cause of it, and he wept bitterly over Old Mark's grave; and from that day Jim Hendy of Winsted was a different man.

G. WILLIAMS.

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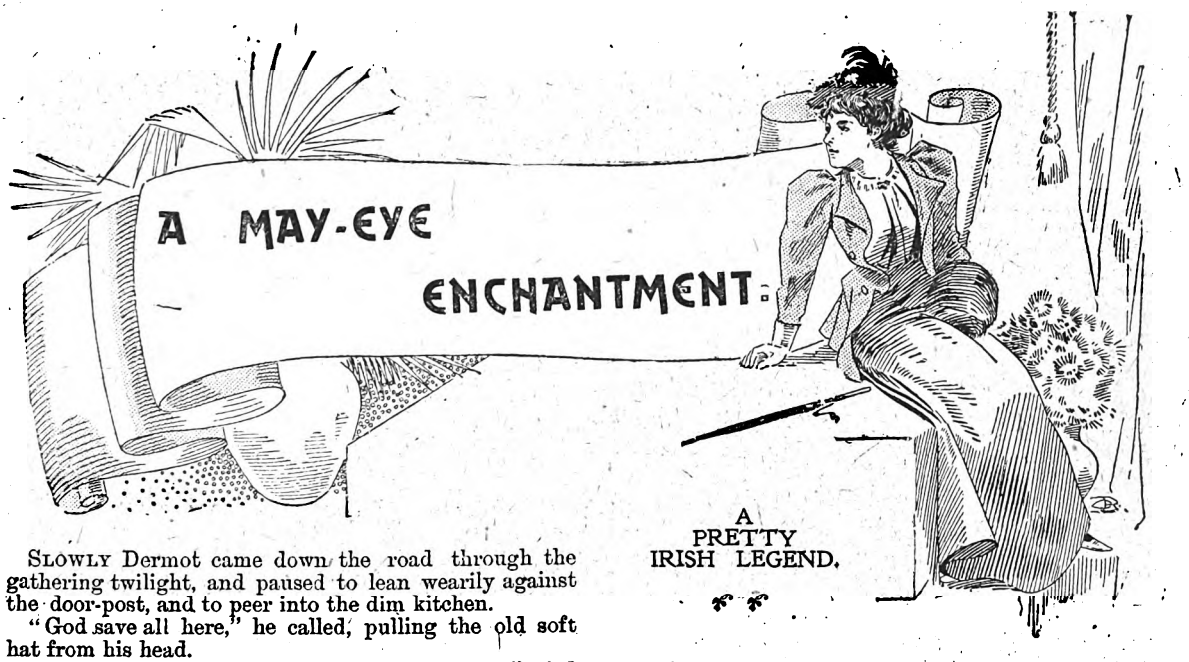

A MAY-EVE ENCHANTMENT.

A PRETTY IRISH LEGEND.

SLOWLY Dermot came down the road through the gathering twilight, and paused to lean wearily against the door-post, and to peer into the dim kitchen.

"God save all here," he called, pulling the old soft hat from his head.

"Arrah, save ye, kindly, Dermot Dhu; come in," cried the hospitable farmer's wife, coming smiling forth, "come in, agra, an' rest yerself. It's a long way ye've come, I'll go bail. Will ye have a sup o' milk, Dermot, or what?"

"Sure, I wouldn't be afther askin' the like of ye, Mrs. Kavanaugh, thank ye kindly, on May-eve, and maybe have all yer luck gone from ye for the year that's comin'."

And the piper smiled dubiously.

"Arrah, don't be talkin', Dermot, but come in an' put off yer pipes. Sure, I'll just shake a grain o' salt in the noggin, an' it'll be all as one the fairies'll never know a word about it. An', be the same token," ran on the good woman, as the piper lifted his pipes from his shoulder and sank on the comfortable settle; "'tis a fine grand harvest o' rowan branches an' primrose the boys an' girls has gathered to put about the place an' keep away the good people this May-day, an' maybe ye'd give us a hand wid them, Dermot, when ye're rested, for there's no tellin' when Jim'll be back from the town this night, an' he's like Lanna Machree's dog, goin' a step o' the road wid every one he meets, an' them tinkers o' boys does all be gone away down to the cross-roads, dressin' up the Maybush, the wild hares, for the morra, an' sure I daren't lave little Johneen up on the roof, at all, at all, he's that thricky. So maybe ye'd make a shift to climb up on the old laddher, Dermot, an' see could ye reach to twist a shlip o' the rowan among the thatch, to keep us all from the fire this blessed year; while Nannie an' meself an' the childher does be puttin' the primroses about the dure."

"Sure, I will, thin, an' welcome, Mrs. Kavanaugh," cried the piper, heartily, when the busy woman paused for breath. "Where are the branches an' the flowers? Sure, I'll have it done in no time."

"Here, childher," called Mrs. Kavanaugh from the door to an invisible audience, who answered her summons with shrieks of laughter, "lave them chickens alone, an' come in—musha, would ye look at that now, an' nothin'll do her but to go to Tralee this night," with which exasperated cry, Mrs. Kavanaugh started in pursuit of a fleeting fowl, while the bright-eyed, dancing persecutors of the unfortunate one poured into the kitchen and flung at the feet of the piper great trailing masses of magical mountain ash, and shimmering clouds of pale primroses, whose faint radiance gleaming on door-post and threshold, would guard the house and home from malign fairy influence on this most dangerous day of the year.

With snatches of song and ready peals of laughter, piper and children set to work, and before evening shadows had settled on the scene the roof's edge was a dark mass of verdure, and the primroses hung their pale, sweet heads along lintel and door-post, and even lay a silken carpet for the feet, at the door, where, however, careful Nannie had first strewed some sifted ashes and threatened with dire punishment any of the prattling army who dared to set foot thereon.

"Whin mornin' comes, we'll see the print av a fut," she averred, gravely, "an' if it's turned in, 'tis a weddin' 'twill be, but if it's turned out, it's a funeral we'll be havin' wisha, before the year's out."

"Well, maybe 'twill be turned in, Nannie, an' for yerself," said Piper Dermot; "an' now I'll be travellin' on, Mrs. Kavanaugh," and he slung his pipes over his shoulder and caught up his hat in readiness to depart.

"Sure it's not goin' ye'd be, Dermot, widout bite or sup," cried the hospitable woman, aghast, "an' afther all yer toilin'. Arrah, sit down, man, to yer supper; sure, the childher are wild to hear a tune before ye go."

"Not to-night," answered he, absently, glancing up at the darkening sky, "I must be goin'. I've far to go to-night—far to go."

"It's not—arrah, Dermot"—pausing and casting an anxious, fearful look about her, while her voice fell to an awe-struck whisper. "It's not on the hills ye'd be wanderin' to-night, of all nights in the year. Is it May

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Eve ye'd be venturin' there among the good people? Sure, they'll put an enchantment on ye, Dermot, an' keep ye there to play for thim, ye that can play so grand intirely. Stop here, agra, an' don't go next nor near the fairy paths to-night."

But Dermot was not listening; he was leaning forward with a rapt look on his pale face. "I must go," he muttered, hurriedly, and with a farewell wave of his hand, he left the house abruptly and struck out, bolting up the hillside path, brushing the branches aside in his haste.

"'Tis twice I heard that tune to-night," he muttered. "I must know where it came from," and on he rushed impelled by some strange prankish power that seemed to urge him forward, while ever and anon he seemed to catch a clear, distant small echo of some weird music that fainted and died ere he could catch its full meaning.

Daylight had gone and grey mists were creeping down when the piper emerged from the woody lane, and set his feet on the winding path that led across the upland to the well-known fairy hill, and as he stumbled onward, with wide-open, unseeing eyes, he was suddenly recalled to his senses by an apparition that stood smiling in his way—a gentle maid, with a shawl thrown over her fair locks, who looked with wonder in her grey eyes upon his pale, wild face.

"An' where are ye goin', Dermot?" she asked, and he roused himself from his dream and answered her, still in a nervous, absent manner.

"Beyant, beyant. But, Moya, 'tis yerself should be at home, colleen. Go!"

"If yer crossin' the hill, Dermot, I'll put these on ye to keep ye safe."

Afraid to question him further, remembering the gossip of the village about Piper Dermot's knowledge of the "good people," yet unwilling to let him go unprotected, she bent forward and, ere he knew it, had fastened in his coat a glimmering bunch of the same golden blossoms that he had just strewn at the Kavanaugh's door.

He nodded, muttered his thanks, and was gone.

Moya stood silent, watching, and as he pressed on, he listened eagerly for a recurrence of the fairy music, and, not hearing it and suddenly remembering, plucked from his coat the fragrant badge of safety, and with a regretful gesture, cast them upon the ground; she, too, threw aside the blossoms she held and followed him, while the last grey mist of light faded into the night, and the pale stars slowly stole out and stood watching above.

When Moya reached the well-worn green mound the people called the fairy rath, she paused, exhausted, out of breath, and discouraged, for Dermot had disappeared in the darkness.

About her the dark shapes of trees and bushes waved in the pale starlight, stirred by a soft wind that blew fresh and grateful on her face, and, as she rested, bewildered, frightened, the soft breeze's caress seemed to become something more tangible, like the brush of silken garments.

The swaying forms of branch and tree, in the faintly growing light of rose and pearl, resolved themselves into the shapes of graceful dancers. Moya felt herself drawn into the slow dance, to the ever-increasing melody of mystic music that grew louder and sweeter as they circled and floated, changing, round and round, back and forth, upon the summit of the fairy rath, where, in the centre, with all the wild, eager, longing gone from his eyes, and an ineffable, ecstatic content upon his face, sat Dermot, playing for the fairy throng the enchanting melody to which her feet were compelled to move.

* * * * *

Midday was shining bright upon the village. All the people of the townland, fresh and gay in holiday attire, were pouring forth upon the roads that led to where, upon a broad green, the Maybush stood decked with garlands, ready for the festivities.

No thought of evil hap had shadowed the merriment of the day. No evil spirit, in the guise of an unknown old woman had appeared at the door to beg for fire, salt or butter, which would surely be refused.

Each careful housewife had placed overnight a spent coal beneath the rowan-wreathed churn, and another under her baby's cradle, and, rising before sunrise, had decorated the soft-eyed cows with branches of primroses and marsh marigolds, while her daughters washed their rosy faces with the beautifying dews of this first day of May.

Moya, alone, was missed by her young companions and many were the wondering exclamations as to her absence, as group after group joined the throng and danced in circles about the garlanded Maybush.

Pipers and fiddlers, gathered from all the country-side, sat and added their merry music to the busy noises of the festival.

But one was absent, and late and slow he came down the hill, haggard and pale, with an unseeing look in his eyes, and hardly heeding or answering the hearty welcome that greeted him on all sides, moved to the centre of the dancing circle and began to play the fairy music he had learned upon the rath.

As the first notes floated out upon the air, the other pipers stopped and stared in surprise, and a sudden hush fell upon the throng, who, after one instant of amazement, yielded themselves to the mystic melody, and all, young and old, impelled by some unknown power, began to dance, with a mad grace that was never known before, round and round, in eddying circles, about the nodding, whispering branches of the fairy tree.

Twice, three times, did Dermot play the bewitching melody, and as the last notes died away, the dancers, breathless, fascinated, crowded about him, while some of the maids flung a chaplet of pale spring flowers around his dark, bowed head.

"Once more," they entreated him to play. "Once more." They had never danced to such music before.

And through the piper's weary brain were crowding strange memories of the fairy revels of the night before, of the unearthly grace of Moya, and the dearly-bought charm of the magical strain, and of some injunction laid upon him when the scene had faded from his view at the first glimmering of coming day. Not to play the melody for mortals more than three times. Was that it? He could not be sure. He hardly cared. The enchantment was still upon him, and he was conscious only of a dull longing to know what was going on inside of the green hill that had shut out the spirits from his sight at dawn.

Recklessly, he took up his pipes in answer to the clamour of the multitude. They started to their feet, ready to dance, when, as the first musical strain came from the pipes, it suddenly broke into a harsh, cracked wail, and the piper flung up his hands and fell forward on his face, dead.

GERALDINE HAVERTY.

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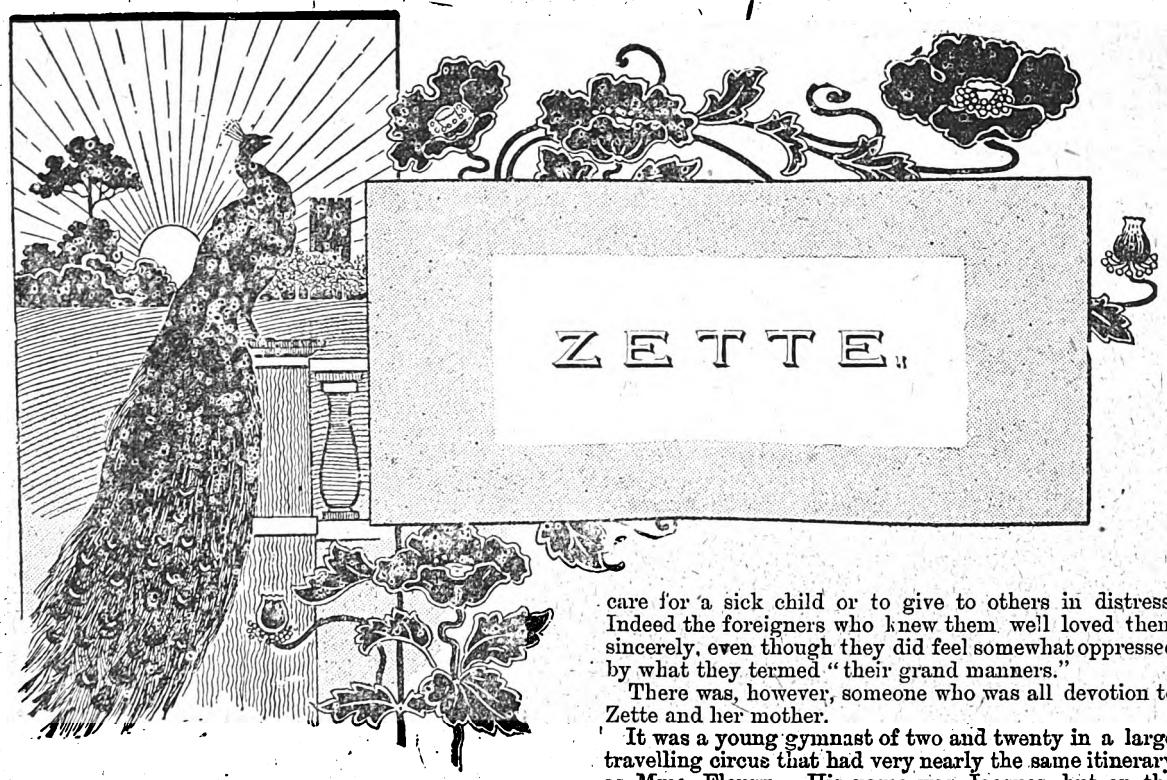

UPON the posters which hung on the outside of the caravan she was styled "Mlle. Antonia, Somnambule Extralucide."

Her mother called her Zette—her real name was Suzanne.

She was a pretty girl, not very large, with fair complexion and long black hair that she let float about her during her consultations, though ordinarily she wore it in a loose coil upon the nape of a neck that was perfect.

Never having done much work, her hands were delicate and well shaped. She was enough of a coquette to wish to keep them so. She had a finely modelled form, and to have seen her simply dressed in some quiet colour, with the gait of a wise little workwoman, one would never have suspected her strange calling.

Her mother, Mme. Floury, was as little like others of her class as her daughter. About her there was nothing in common with the shrews who frequent fairs in red dresses and soiled skirts. She had the air of a little merchant who was good and proper with a winning, honest smile, and people stopped before the caravan and even entered there (without thinking of the charlatanism on the posters) in order to see the interior of this small dwelling that smelled so sweet.

The vehicle was painted brown, with a thread of gold running the lengths of the plinths. There was a tiny balcony in front of it, and on this balcony convulvulus and nasturtium vines, planted in boxes, twined about wires up to the roof, where they clustered in bright-hued bunches.

Along the route persons stared in amazement at this queer coach all covered with garlands of flowers.

The two women were always together, but associated very little with their neighbours. They were not proud, and having the best of hearts were the first to offer to care for a sick child or to give to others in distress. Indeed the foreigners who knew them well loved them sincerely, even though they did feel somewhat oppressed by what they termed "their grand manners."

There was, however, someone who was all devotion to Zette and her mother.

It was a young gymnast of two and twenty in a large travelling circus that had very nearly the same itinerary as Mme. Floury. His name was Jacques, but on the playbills they spelled it Jack. He was exceedingly handsome and of no common type. There was fire in his eyes and much intelligence in his smile. There was, too, much tenderness in this same smile, especially when he spoke to Zette. His love for this pretty brunette—so unlike any other woman he had seen about him in his wandering life—was very sincere.

Near her he felt himself quite another man to what he was in the circus. There was such an atmosphere of honesty surrounding Zette that his own manners, when with her, were altogether different from what they had been, and he was astonished at how well they became him.

Then, too, he had dreamed of being loved by this sweet girl and of never being separated from her. Their positions accorded admirably. His salary was good, and some day perhaps he might enter one of the great circuses of Lyons or Paris. It would be charming to find so sweet a little wife awaiting his coming after his work was done.

He had often spoken to Zette of these plans. He loved her so dearly that it could not be possible she did not love him at least a little.

Zette always listened silently, visibly touched by what she heard, and he thought each time she would say "Yes," but when he had finished by asking, with such pleading in his eyes, "Will you be my wife, Zette?" she replied very gravely, "No."

Then Jacques would be astonished. Why not? Could it be that she did not believe him when he said he loved her; that she had no confidence in him; that she did not love him?

"Yes, I love you," Zette answered sweetly, "but I do not wish to marry."

And she would never say why.

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One day, however, Mme. Floury blamed her for refusing the hand of this brave lad.

"Listen, mother," she said. "I adore Jacques, and I believe I shall always remain single because I do not wish to marry him. Do you remember the day when we went together to the circus? I saw as we entered how all the women who were there turned their lorgnettes towards him, and afterwards they smiled and talked about him and tried to attract his attention by applauding him. I ought perhaps to have been proud to think that this man whom they all wanted loved me, and that I had only to say the word to be his wife. Ah, well, in my heart there was nothing but jealousy. I wanted to tear the lorgnettes away from those women. From what I suffered that evening I understood how much more I might suffer if we were married. No, that cannot be. He is too handsome. See? Suppose some day, when he had grown tired of me, one of those women should take him from me. I would die surely, You know now, mother, why I cannot say yes."

But notwithstanding this obstinate refusal, which he could not explain, Jacques came every day. He no longer mentioned the subject to Zette, understanding that he was contending against a fixed resolve, except once when he said to her:

"You will not have me, Zette, and I do not want any other woman. Some day, though, you may change your mind, and then you need only hold out your hand and say to me, 'Let us be married, and it will make me happy.'"

So after thus simply settling the affair Jacques was like a brother in the house. It was he who in the springtime planted the seeds in the boxes upon the little balcony. It was he who twined the tendrils about the wires, and it was he who at all seasons furnished the gilded porcelain vases that held the flowers.

These flowers were a great luxury to Zette.

This state of things did not long continue, however. The young girl was now twenty and Jacques twenty-six. One evening he presented his friends with tickets to the circus. It was the last day of a long continued fair, and Zette and her mother had nothing to do. So they decked themselves in their best and went early.

Mme. Floury was much amused with the horses, the rope-dancers, the clowns, the trained dogs. Zette thought only of Jacques, whose name on the programme occupied a line to itself, and whose apparatus was hung up at the top of the high tent.

The latter consisted of bars, with copper balls that shone, a maze of trapezes, ropes and pulleys, and the young girl, a little frightened, inquired if it was all secure.

At last the first part of the performance was over, and keeping time to a slow waltz Jacques appeared. He was as beautiful as a god in his silk tights, that displayed to advantage his superbly moulded form, and, for the rest, his costume consisted of black satin calecon, spangled with gold.

After having responded by a bow to the applause of the crowd and by a smile to Zette's smile, he darted up a rope to his trapeze.

The preliminaries were gone through amid prolonged bravos, for the handsome gymnast was a favourite, and it was truly a pleasure to see him act—the supple body so pliant, yet so marvelously exact in its movements.

Then there came silence—even the orchestra was still.

It was to be the hit of the evening and a new feat that was to give an added glory to the circus. He was to leap from one trapeze to another, with his face and head covered, then suddenly drop from this giddy height upon a net stretched below him.

The two trapezes were swinging with a regular movement. Jacques, standing on a little board, his head enveloped in a black velvet bag, put forth his hand blindly. The crowd held its breath. The man was going to jump—he had jumped!

A piercing cry rent the air.

Missing the second trapeze, which had been badly regulated, Jacques fell to the net, but it proved too frail to support his weight, and striking upon the seats he rolled to the ground, where he lay motionless.

With a cry of horror, Zette sprang to her feet, rigid and pale, her eyes fixed upon the spot where the men were now carrying away the apparently lifeless body of her friend.

Then suddenly, seizing her mother's arm, "Come," she said in hollow voice.

Breaking through the crowd, the two women reached the stables, but were refused admission.

For a long while they remained at the entrance, listening to what was said around them, but no one knew anything. Finally Mme. Floury saw a clown whom she recognised as one of Jacques' friends. He was just coming out of the refreshment room when she called him.

"The net broke the force of the fall," said the man, whose face looked troubled, even under the paint. "The doctor says he will be lame for life, and that this ends for him his profession as a gymnast. Poor fellow! But he has something laid up for a rainy day."

Mme. Floury looked at Zette. She was very pale, and her eyes were fixed upon the man as he spoke as though trying to find if he lied. At last she said, "Let us go."

And thanking the clown by a gesture she left the circus.

The two women did not speak as they traversed the grounds of the fair, and they were still silent as they ascended their own little stairway. But when Mme. Floury had lighted the candle she saw Zette sitting beside the bed, with a strange smile on her lips. She felt frightened for her and went to her.

"Of what are you thinking, little daughter?" she asked, trying to reassure herself.

Then Zette laid her head upon her mother's shoulder, with a childlike gesture.

"I think—that now I can marry Jacques," she told her.

J. W. G.

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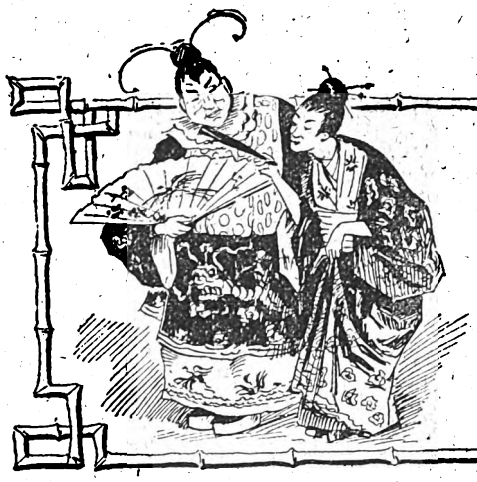

Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

XI.—HE COMES HOME LOADED WITH PLANS, AND MEETS WITH SEVERAL REBUFFS.

THAT Mr. Bowser was about to make a break of some sort was apparent to Mrs. Bowser before he had been home five minutes, but she asked no questions, and he managed to keep quiet until after dinner. Then he rubbed his hands together and chuckled softly and said:

"I suppose that if I should tell you that I expect to make a clear two hundred pounds a month at least for the next five years you'd call it one of my fads, wouldn't you?"

"Perhaps not," answered Mrs. Bowser doubtfully. "Are you going to speculate?"

"Not at all. I have simply struck a sure thing."

"If it's a sure thing it will be nice. What is it?"

"I'll tell you, though you won't understand. Not one woman in ten thousand has a business head on her. I have often wished you knew something of business, so that I could talk to you. It isn't your fault that you were created to read novels and gad about to the shops in search of bargains, and so I don't lay it up against you. I'll tell you what my new movement is. I am going in for pigs."

"I can understand that much," quietly replied Mrs. Bowser. "You are going to raise pigs in order to supply the market with pork."

"That's the plan exactly, and you deserve praise for grasping my meaning so quickly. I propose to buy two hundred pigs. A pig three months old can be bought for a pound."

"And two hundred pigs for two hundred pounds."

"That's it. I invest £200 in pigs. At the age of one year every pig is ready to be made into pork. The average weight of a one-year old pig ready for the butcher is two hundred pounds. Fresh pork is worth sixpence halfpenny per pound. That is £5 10s. for every pig, or £4 10s. clear profit. Any man with an ounce of brains in his head can make £5,000 clear profit in two years. Is there any fad about that?"

"I'm sorry I haven't got a business head on me," said Mrs. Bowser as she got pencil and paper, "but I will try to keep up with you. Where are you going to fatten your pigs?"

"Why, on a farm, of course. You don't suppose I'm going to turn the basement of our house into a pig pen, do you?"

"But, where is your farm?"

Mr. Bowser's jaw dropped. He hadn't accounted for a farm.

"A farmer reckons that it costs threepence per pound to make pork for market," continued Mrs. Bowser. "Those are his figures even when he owns his farm and

"Woman, do you take me for a fool?"

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grows his own corn. It will take, in addition to all other feed, at least twenty bushels of corn for every one of your pigs. Have you taken into consideration the buying of 4,000 bushels of corn, Mr. Bowser?"

He began to flush up and breathe hard, but he made no reply.

"To look after two hundred pigs you must keep at least five men. It will cost you a good deal for their wages. There will be more or less loss to take into consideration. You must also allow for butchering and getting your pork to market. And you haven't counted in——"

"Woman, do you take me for a fool?" shouted Mr. Bowser as he jumped off his chair and frightened the family cat under the piano.

"Not at all," she calmly replied. "A fool would go into this pig scheme and lose £1,000 instead of making £5,000, but you won't."

He didn't know whether to bluff it out or give in gracefully, but finally decided to do the latter. Her

Then the tramp broke loose and made for the street.

facts and figures were beyond dispute and made him feel cold, but for fear she would feel puffed up over it, he said:

"Of course, I should have reckoned it all out to a penny before investing my money. What you say is all guess-work, but we'll let it go for a time. In fact, the pig scheme was a secondary matter. I've got a better thing than that. I was in hopes Brown might drop in this evening and talk it over with me."

"Why not talk it over with me?" asked Mrs. Bowser.

"You won't understand it, of course, but I'll give you an outline of it. How much do you suppose a man down in Surrey has made out of chickens in the last year!"

"Two hundred pounds, perhaps."

"Over £1,000 clear profit, and next year he will double that amount. I've got my facts and figures down pat, and I'm going in for chicken rearing."

"What are your facts and figures?"

"You can't understand them, but I'll give you a few. I start with 1,000 hens."

"Where do you start?"

"Where do I start? Perhaps you imagine I'm going to make a hen roost of the top of the house! I start in our back yard, of course. I buy 1,000 hens at a shilling apiece."

"I don't know where you are going to do it," said Mrs. Bowser. "The very lowest figure you can buy them at is eighteenpence, and the fowls will be pretty poor at that. Having got your thousand hens together, then what?"

"Then I depend on eggs and chickens," replied Mr. Bowser. "I reckon on 500 eggs per day. We'll call it fifty dozen, and put the price at a shilling per dozen. There's fifty shillings per day certain. One thousand hens ought to hatch ten thousand chickens per year. Each chicken will readily sell for——"

"Just wait a minute. Let us begin with the back yard. We have an area of 30ft. by 45ft. One thousand hens wouldn't have room to flap their wings in that space."

"Are you trying to make out that I don't know enough to come in when it rains!" shouted Mr. Bowser as he bobbed up with furious gestures.

"Not at all; you are going in for poultry farming. You are going to make a fortune. I haven't a business head on me, of course, but I do understand a little arithmetic. You might coop up fifty hens in the back yard, but not more. As to eggs, if you get two hundred a day from a thousand hens you would do well. The increase would not be half what you imagine. Then you have not counted in the expense of the coops, nor feed and help. You see——"

"Yes, I see—of course I see! I see that you know nothing about poultry. I tell you that any man with an ounce of brains can make £1,000 a year out of a thousand fowls."

"Well, let us see how it is done."

"It's done in a business way, of course."

"Then we'll work it out in a business way. You will want wood and nails for the coops, and there will be the carpenter to pay. How much wood——"

"Not a plank—not a foot!" howled Mr. Bowser.

"But how are you going to do?"

"None of your business! I go to work and invent a plan to make £1,000 a year as easy as rolling off a log. I come home feeling pleasant over it. Like an ass I state the plan to you, and you immediately and maliciously set out to tear it to pieces. Woman——"

It was lucky for Mrs. Bowser that just then he heard the voice of a tramp at the back door asking the cook for something to eat. It offered him a diversion, and he took advantage of it.

He turned from Mrs. Bowser and rushed downstairs, followed by the cat, and he fell upon that unsuspicious tramp like a thunderbolt.

There was a mix-up, three or four whoops and yells, and then the tramp broke loose and spread his wings and made for the street.

He didn't stop to open the gate, but went over the fence like a bird, and the chase was over.

When Mr. Bowser returned to the sitting-room pencil and paper had disappeared, and the diplomatic Mrs. Bowser was looking into the almanac to see what day in the week the next Bank Holiday would fall on.

M. QUAD.

Next Week: He Buys a Recipe for the Benefit of the Poor.

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For Love of Stella.

I HATED him from the moment I saw him with her, because I saw as well that she loved him with all her body and soul.

Then, one day, as I watched the manner in which her beautiful eyes looked up at him while they walked and talked together, a suspicion leapt into my brain. It became belief. From that hour I watched them stealthily; and at last I came upon them, unseen, at a place I had not supposed they knew of.

It was a shady and secluded spot between two hills, quite remote from the village, and indeed from any habitation. It was a lonely place, with the ruins of a mill above and a deep and dark pool below; lonely, save for a jealous wretch like myself or a pair of lovers.

This, then, I muttered to myself, as I crouched and watched them with a savage heart, was the bower they frequented undisturbed, and where they squandered the hours that were so torturingly long to me.

I heard in the village that he was going away upon the next day, that "some business" was calling him back to town. And I heard and saw more; whispers that were full of meaning glances that conveyed what the whispers dared not convey.

My jealousy, then, had not made me mad. My suspicion, my belief were shared by others! In a little while they would discuss openly Stella's shame.

That night I planned his death, and on the next I lay in wait for him. I had learnt during the day that he would walk to the station, which lay a mile outside of the village, since he had sent his baggage ahead during the afternoon.

It would be a fine night, though dark, for such a jaunty gentleman. The air was balmy and fragrant, and the sod by the roadside, green and elastic. As I crouched there I laughed softly, and wondered why people should think a murderer such a terrible being.

But how the time dragged. Presently I heard the soft sound of wheels approaching slowly along the moist and sandy road. My good humour gave way to sudden anger, and I swore in the darkness. Had the fellow decided, at the last moment, to be driven? In such a case I should have two, himself and the driver, to deal with. But as the vehicle approached I breathed more freely; for though I could but dimly make out his form, I perceived by his voice that the driver was some half-drunken farmer returning from a protracted visit to some village bar.

I slipped back into the wood, and lighting a match glanced at my watch. I saw there was still an hour before the midnight express would be due to leave. So I composed myself comfortably on the bank, with one eye and both ears open, like a watch-dog, and fell into a reverie.

I pictured my successful rival bidding his last good-bye to Stella, her tears, his kisses, his flattery, his lies. Then I saw him set forth, erect, his head up, his hands in his pockets, as was his fashion. I smiled to myself as I reflected how I could bring him down, and on the comedy that would ensue.

Was not that his whistle that I heard, the air of some love song I had heard him humming through the village streets?

Perhaps he found the walk along the dark road lonely and was endeavouring to keep his spirits at their normal level.

Bother him! what had happened? Did he suspect something that he had stopped his whistling? I would slip into the road.

Ah! there is a tiny flame in the darkness. He has halted merely to light a cigar. The burning match blazes for an instant, then dies out upon the road. Now the glow of the cigar grows brighter as my unsuspecting friend approaches.

Now he is abreast of me! I could have touched him. A moment more and he has passed, not dreaming that another being, mad with jealousy and hate, is crouching in the grass at his feet.

And now I have sprung up after him and am upon

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him, like a panther, my steel-like fingers about his throat, dragging him down to the road and choking to silence the cry he tries to make. His whole body struggles frantically and his finger-nails are driven into my wrists; but nothing could lessen my grip upon his throat; and soon his struggles cease, and he lies limp upon the road.

I turned him upon his face and bound his wrists tightly; and turning him on his back once more, gagged him. Then I sat and waited until consciousness had returned fully; and in the meanwhile I relieved his pockets of some of the fragrant cigars, and smoked one, enjoying the luxury of the performance, and laughing aloud at the humour of the situation and the success of my undertaking.

Presently my fine fellow stirred, and weakly endeavoured to sit up. I leant up over him. He was breathing heavily, and I could see that he was convulsed with fear. To his dilated sight my face in the pale darkness must have seemed a very devil's as my eyes stared into his.

"Ah!" I said coolly. "So you are recovering?" I knew he could not reply, but I knew that now he could hear and understand every word; and I revelled in the supreme mastery of my position.

"You look surprised," I said. "Let me help you to sit up." I jerked him into a sitting posture. "In a moment I must ask you to rise altogether, as we have a tedious walk before us."

I stared into his face and saw that it was frowning with rage and convulsed with fear. Nevertheless he tried to kick me with his nearest foot.

"It is possible you do not know me," I went on, as I blew a cloud of smoke into his face. "For the past two weeks I have been a thing of too small consequence for you to notice. To-night that is changed. Come!" I exclaimed sharply, grasping his shoulder and shaking him. "Confess! You have won the love of Stella by your lying promises!" And at the thought I struck him heavily upon the face, so that he fell back prone upon the road. But even then he tried to do me violence with his heavy walking-boots.

So I retorted upon his shins, and he actually rolled over with the pain.

It had began to rain.

The pleasure of our march through the woods, I reflected, would not be enhanced by this atmospheric change.

I raised my prisoner by the shoulders and made him stand. Immediately he attempted to run, and I had to detain him forcibly.

"Now," I said to him, "you will go ahead of me, do you understand? I will direct your steps. You have only to put one foot in front of the other and everything will go beautifully. If you are not tractable, if you show a desire to hang back, there is this."

And I laid the cold blade of a knife upon his cheek.

Then we went forward through the darkness and the drizzle. But why dwell upon that dreary tramp? It would indeed make a chapter to tell of the arduous march; of how my fine fellow would run into some great tree, striking his head, or stumble over a root and fall his entire length, scratching and bruising his face, but never breaking an arm or a leg, for that would have been unfortunate. How I made the black wood ring with my merry and cheering laughter. And all the time not a sigh or a word of complaint from my brave companion, thanks to the liberal manner in which I had, with so much forethought, literally bound his lips to silence. Nevertheless I had on several occasions to resort to a peculiar sort of persuasion, since he evinced a strong inclination to go contrary to my wishes.

At last our haven was in sight. It was the old mill above the pool; the pool where he and Stella had spent so many agreeable hours. Although it was dark, I perceived that he had recognised the place; and I grew suddenly hot with anger as I thought of my wrongs. From this very place had I not with burning eyes watched him upon the grassy slope below, beside the still water of the pool, kissing the lips of the woman whose hand I had never touched with mine own! Heavens! when I thought of it my brain seemed on fire; and then I laughed in mad triumph as I remembered that here I had him at my mercy. Mercy? I laughed again.

Then I lit a lantern and held it aloft so that we saw each other face to face. Mine must have reflected what was passing in my brain, for he seemed to grow white, and shrank back. Then suddenly, without warning he rushed at me and tried again to kick me.

"Be careful!" I exclaimed, as I endeavoured to get behind him. "The place, as you see, is ruinous, and the floor is rotten."

As I spoke, his clumsy foot went through a plank and he was thrown backwards, wrenching his leg. I managed to extricate him, and with some difficulty bound his ankles, for, despite the injury he had just sustained, he resented the operation. Then I removed the gag. The first word he uttered was an oath.

"Unfasten my hands," he roared and his voice was like thunder.

"I trust I will not be so foolish," I remarked as I sat down upon a box within a few feet of him. "Now, we can talk pleasantly."

"By Heaven!" he roared again.

His chest was heaving with agitation, and he banged his heavy heels upon the quivering floor. "You shall pay for this joke!"

"Joke?" I answered. 'I am glad you think it is a joke. In such a case you have a remarkable faculty forseeing the funny side of things. Now," I said changing my tone and giving him a kick in the ribs. "confess before I have done with you that you have gained Stella's heart by cunning and deceit."

"How dare you mention her name? You vile coward! To think that you ever polluted the same air she breathed!"

"Tut!" I said, though I felt the blood flame into my my face. "You do sacrilege to the place. You forget that just below us is the verdant bank, the glassy pool, the bower of sweet words and kisses, that will be so dear in Stella's memory now that you are gone."

"You villainous hound!" he panted, and glared at with his blue eyes so fiercely that for the moment I forgot myself and stepped backward.

He laughed loudly.

"Now, you dirty coward," he said, "how much is it you want? Be quick!"

I stepped nearer and bent over him.

"How much is it I want?" I said slowly.

I felt my heart swelling with hate, and involuntarily my fingers tightened and relaxed.

"Yes, how much money?" he said. His voice was quieter now, and he was watching me closely.

"Money?" I said. "Money?" Then I stood erect and laughed. "Do you think I brought you here for money?" I saw his cheek pale as I said that. "You are mad!"

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"What do you intend doing?" he said. I saw that he was striving to remain calm and appear unconcerned.

"Look here," I answered. I removed a plank of the floor. Then I rolled him beside the opening, and he cursed me for my pains. I made him lie face downwards with his chin on the edge of the plank.

"Look down," I said, as I stooped and held the lantern through the opening. Its light glistened upon the black waters that ran silently beneath.

"Coward!" he hissed; and rolling over on his back glared up at me. I was piqued at his insolence and kicked him.

"Enough!" I said sullenly. "You are wasting time. I must get back to my bed." And I raised his feet in order to bring him parallel with the opening. But even then he fought as it were with his bound body; and opening his mouth wide he yelled with the full power of his lungs.

The place shook. I struck him over the mouth.

"Save your breath!" I said. "You will have need of plenty in a moment." And I endeavoured to force him through the hole. But his shoulders were broad and he stuck.

"Give me a chance for my life!" he said. "Let me stand upon my feet!"

I laughed.

"Give me one hand free!" he cried.

Then by sheer force, my knee upon his shoulder, I forced him through, and his body splashed heavily into the water.

He was gone. I took the lantern and peered through the opening, but only the black water as it flowed silently by could be seen. Then I replaced the plank, and for a long time sat with my thoughts.

Suddenly a crash of thunder shook the old ruin. I sprang up. A storm had been gathering, and now it broke in fury. The rain fell in a torrent and poured through the decayed roof. The vivid lightning lit every corner of the ruinous place, blinding me, and then leaving me in inky darkness; and the thunder shook the tottering walls.

Then suddenly I heard the wind come sweeping like an angry voice through the wood. This was not a safe place to remain in.

Moreover, I must get back to the village and to bed ere dawn, in order that suspicion might not be aroused. So I rushed forth and was drenched ere I reached the wood.

The wood seemed haunted, and I could not refrain from looking back. I tried to laugh away my fear; but at last I broke into a race between myself and my terror, stumbling, falling, until at length, cut and bruised and breathless, I leapt from the wood into the road.

I did not meet a soul as I hurried home. It was three o'clock, but I could not sleep. My night's work had been too much for my nerves. I plied myself with brandy, and at last, as the clouds and the dawn were breaking, I fell into a troubled slumber.

When I awoke the sun was shining. I sat up. My head seemed bursting. Then, like a flash, like the sting of a whip, came the recollection of my crime. I sprang out of bed, trembling! Perhaps already the murder had been discovered. I peered fearfully from my window. But the street was quiet. Then I reflected that no one would go near the place, not even Stella, now that he had gone away. I grew calmer and had a pull at my brandy flask.

Then the words repeated themselves in my brain. Gone away? Perhaps that thunder had brought the body to the top. In such an event I should lose no time in hurrying thither and burying it; or better still, weighting it, and sinking it in the pool. Fool that I was; I should have taken that precaution at the time. Hurriedly I dressed, and with an appearance of calm walked through the village. Once in the wood, I ran.

As I reached the stream I saw that the mill had been blown down by the violence of the storm. I beat my way through the bushes toward the pool. Then, as I parted the branches and glanced along the bank I was turned as if to stone.

The body of my victim lay upon the grass, its glassy eyes staring to the blue heaven. And over it bent a woman.

The snapping of the twigs startled her, and she raised her head.

It was Stella, the woman I loved, for whom I fancied, I had done this thing.

When she saw me she rose and burst out laughing and ran toward me. The look upon her white face froze my blood.

Good Heavens! she had gone mad.

* * * * *

I sprang up with a cry, shaking from head to foot. I was standing by the roadside, where I had come to lie in wait for him.

The clouds were gone, and above in the blue strip of heaven between the dark tops of the wood, the calm stars were gleaming.

It had been nothing but a dream, then!

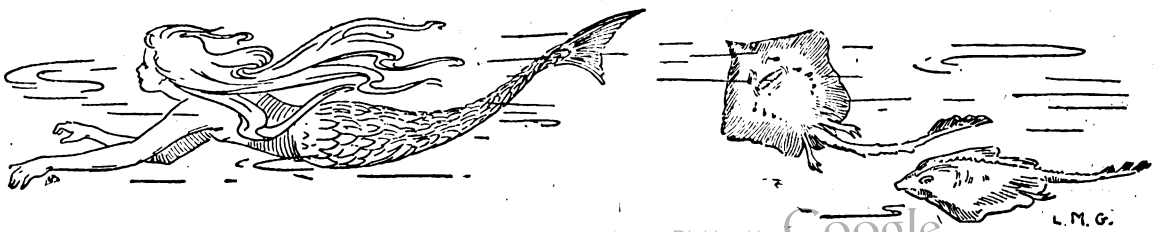
A carriage was approaching. Instinctively I shrank from the highway; but I was observed. There were four people in the carriage.

One of them, the man whom I had dreamed I had murdered, leant over and looked at me. Then he turned to the woman beside him, and in the starlight I saw the pale but happy face of Stella.

"Perhaps it's that poor fool who fancied himself in love with Stella!" I heard her father say.

Then the carriage passed, and I heard the heavy wheels turn in the sand road.

M. ARIE.



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MISTAKEN FOR A LORD.

If a Britisher wants to go abroad on a cash capital of £50 there is no law to prevent it, even if he is a newspaper man who has saved and economised for six or seven years to get that much wealth together.

When I started out with my friend Gillam, who was an artist instead of a journalist, and had £10 less capital as well, we took third class passage on a steamer and planned to do Europe on foot and avoid all extravagances.

As to how we got along until we reached Greece and a certain event happened is of no great consequence. We tramped here and there, ate, slept, and had a fairly good time.

From Athens we went on a tramp up country, viewing tombs and ruins by the way, and after putting in two days at Marathon we started out one morning for a hamlet called Histrophus.

We were first met by about a dozen dogs of all sizes, ages and colours, and each one a worse looking dog than the one who came after. After we had driven the pack off we were charged down upon by nine children of various sizes and ages, all of whom needed soap and water.

They rallied around us for small coin, and not getting any, they fell back, and gave four women a chance. We got rid of the latter to encounter three men, one of whom could speak a little English.

They were dirty, ragged villains, who did not hesitate to threaten us, and not a word could we get out of them about the ruins until we had satisfied them with *backsheesh*.

Gillam started out after a bit to do some sketching, while I found a place to take a nap, and the inhabitants of Histrophus finally got out of breath begging for coins and trying to get us to buy an old skeleton goat for ten shillings, and went back to their huts.

At the end of two hours I was awakened by someone giving me a smart kick on the hip, and I roused myself to see that we had been taken prisoners by four brigands. The fellows had come down off the mountains, about four miles away, having probably been notified by a messenger from the village.

I have many times read of the picturesque Greek brigands, but the four who gobbled us up that day must have gone out of the picturesque business some weeks previously.

They were a ragged, ugly lot, no better than the men of the village and we were far more disgusted with their breaths, than afraid of their knives.

The leader spoke English fairly well, and I have always felt grateful to him on that account. All leaders of Greek brigands should learn three or four languages before proceeding to business, as it is a great help towards an understanding about identity, money matters, and so forth.

It was the leader who had kicked me, which I have always taken as a compliment, and as I sat up he saluted me and said:

"My lord, you will please consider yourself a prisoner and come along without resistance."

"But don't make any mistake on me," I replied. "As near as I can make out from this short range you are brigands."

"I am Bobetto," he said as he laid his hand on his heart and bowed low.

"Excuse me, that I never heard of you before. You are a brigand, and your object money, and this is your band?"

"My lord is correct."

"Now about this lord business. Let us have an understanding. Who do you take me for?"

"An English lord, my lord. I have been expecting you for several days. The name I cannot pronounce, but I know you to be the gentleman. Have no fears for your safety, as it will be a case of ransom."

"This is kind of you. If you take me for an English lord, who do you take this other chap to be?"

"Your companion, sir. His name I heard, but cannot give it. He will also be held for ransom."

Then we started off to the west.

The particular retreat of this band was half-way up a mountain and consisted of two brush huts and a fire in front of them.

We were in no manner ill used. They could have

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robbed us of what little money we had, and personal property, but they did not even search us for weapons.

As soon as we had arrived at the huts, however, Bobetto brought out stationery and commanded me to write to the British Minister at Athens and obtain the sum of £5,000.

Both Gillam and I burst out laughing at this demand, and after a little I said to the leader.

"Of what use to play the fool in this matter? As I told you before, though we are Britishers we are poor men at that. We can raise about £50 apiece, but not another halfpenny, and if you take that, we shall have to turn brigands and compete with you in business."

"I don't care, but you are my lord just the same," replied Bobetto.

"You can't make anything out of us, old chap. Had you got hold of a real live lord, you might have made something, and bought a garlic factory, but we are almost down to our last copper. Sorry for you but you can't always hit it, even in the brigand business."

"But you must write," persisted the wooden-headed rascal. "You must write to the British Minister that if he does not send us £2,000 by our messenger your ears will be sent him in a package!"

I read the letter to Bobetto after it was written, and he was perfectly satisfied that it would fetch the cash in reply.

It was sent off by a messenger, who would be gone at least ten days, and then we went into "retirement," It is the rule with all brigands who have a prisoner on hand to lie low and take no chances. I thought it well to prepare this gang for a disappointment, and when the messenger had departed I told them that he would only have the journey for nothing.

"It cannot be for nothing," grimly replied Bobetto, as he brought out a knife and felt its edges. "If no money comes, then your ears go to Athens! If they fail to bring it, then we will send on your heads!"

Sentinels were posted on the hills round to prevent a surprise, and we had nothing to do but loaf about. Bobetto thought he knew the game of poker, and it was for us to undeceive him.

In three days Gillam and I had won every penny he had. We offered to put up £50 against our ears, but the brigands assured us with great dignity that it wasn't the thing.

About once a day I thought it my duty to inform Bobetto that we were moneyless Britishers and that there was nothing in it for him, and he always replied to me with a lift of the eyebrows and a shrug of the shoulders and the words:

"Time will tell, my lord; time will tell. It has happened that I have had to send ears and heads to Athens before."

For the first five days of our captivity we were closely guarded, and there could be no thought of escape. Then, as we appeared to make ourselves at home, the vigilance of the brigands was relaxed,

While only four had been concerned in our capture, there were really six in the band. One of them had a broken leg, and the other was acting as a nurse.

Two sentinels were always stationed at points half a mile away, and occasionally a brigand fell asleep during the day.

I think it was on the eighth day and at about three o'clock in the afternoon when the brigand nurse was sent for provisions.

As two were acting as sentinels and a third was lying helpless, this left only two men to deal with. One of these was Bobetto, and he sat with his back to a rock dozing, owing to the heat of the day.

Gillam was lying on his back, while I was looking carelessly at a Greek newspaper. All of a sudden the artist sat up and whispered to me:

"Let's end this here and now! You tackle the leader, and I'll go for the other fellow!"

The "other fellow" was at the fire heaping the wood together. We rose in unison and made the attack. I gave old Bobetto a kick on the jaw which knocked him over and caused doleful howls, and Gillam hit his man such a blow on the neck as to render him unconscious for half an hour.

There were two guns in camp, and we seized them and made for the highway, only a mile distant. Before departing I gave the leader a tap on the head to quiet his yells, and so far as I know we were not followed a yard.

We reached the highway just in time to get a lift in a passing cart and in a couple of hours were in Marathon.

As to the letter, it was delivered at the consulate, but was looked upon as a joke and the messenger sent off empty handed. We might have lost our ears on his return, but were not there to have them sliced off.

Bobetto died two years later, as I read in the papers, and it is said that he was badly disfigured by a broken jaw—the one "my lord" gave him with his good heavy walking boot.

C. B. LEWIS.

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New Serial Story *Begins To-day.*

EINAR OF THE LONG SWORD.

. . By George C. Wallis . .

Author of "The Winning of Gunhild," "The Gladiator," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE READING OF THE RUNES.

THIS is the saga of Einar Longsword, a strong man of the North, as it was told by a skald in the days before Harald Horrid-locks was called Fairhair; before he fought the kings in Hafir's Fiord, and became the first ruler of all Norway.

* * * * *

When Einar stood forth in old Sweyn's great hall and gave me his sword and battle-axe, that I, Sigmund the Skald, might read the runes engraven upon them, I felt that the inconsiderate gods had thrust upon me a thankless task, for what is at the same time easier or harder than to interfere in quarrels not one's own? I saw in the act a challenge to boastful Hardrada and old Sweyn, and the eyes of Einar, before they rested again upon those of Astrid the Beautiful, looked into mine with honest appeal. I examined the runic symbols carefully, and hesitated before I spoke.

"Do not be afraid of telling the truth, Skald," said Einar impetuously. "It may not suit some here, but neither did the edge of the long sword nor the weight of the axe suit the enemies of my father, Harald Aslison. You have told the story of his love for Gunhild, and the treachery and punishment of Turgrimm, not seldom in this very hall, but you have never yet told the meaning of the runes. Let us hear it now."

The men put down their horns of ale and leaned forward, hands on knees, to listen. Sweyn stirred uneasily in his chair; and burly Hardrada, glancing from Einar to Astrid, and then back to me, scowled evilly, and I thought I saw a start of surprise and fear with the scowl.

I was younger then, and though debarred from the acts of war by a physical weakness, my mind ran ever on deeds of daring, and I loved nothing better than to tell or hear of perilous and callous conquest. So, though I foresaw somewhat of the things that would flow from my reading, I read on. I knew Einar's parents well, and I loved him as my own son. I trusted that his great strength and noble mind would carry him with honour through whatever trouble my words or his love for Astrid might bring upon him, and as I spoke I looked scornfully at Hardrada.

"The runes are scanty, but their meaning is plain," said I, handling the weapons tenderly. "It is written on the blade, by the hand of Thrunna the armourer, that the sword came to him, by a way which he may not tell, from the Halls of Odin, from the anvil of mighty Thor himself. It came unfinished, and Thrunna put an edge upon it with more care than he had ever bestowed on blade before. When he had done he graved upon it this prophecy, which came into his mind unbidden: "Many men shall this sword slay before it be broken, many widows and orphans shall it make, and many tears before its destiny be fulfilled; and it shall win for each of its two first holders, who shall be father and son, a maiden sweet and fair." And on the battle-axe, which I know not the age of, it is written that it shall crack many heads, the heads of honest men as well as those of rogues, but that it shall itself be shivered at last in the breaking of the hardest skull that covers an ill mind in all Norseland.

I gave back the weapons to Einar as the last words left my lips, and smiled at the sneer that was on Hardrada's face. For he was reputed to have the toughest crown in the Northlands, and though he had come but yesterday, it was plain to see that he and Einar were rivals for the hand of Astrid, the only daughter of Earl Sweyn.

"'Tis a likely tale, skald, I vow," cried he, his right hand clutching his dagger; "by the blackness of Hela, a likely tale! Go tell that to the thralls and the women, but insult not men's ears with it."

"You may please yourself whether you believe me or not, Hardrada Hard-skull," said I. "Sigmund the Skald has friends here who know that his tongue is not given to lying, and who will not hear him defamed."

The burly man's cheeks went dull red under the taunt of the nickname that was not often spoken in his hearing, and the torrent of his smouldering passion burst out fiercely. His sword sprang from its sheath, and, brandishing it menacingly, he strode towards me.

"I call upon you, friend Sweyn," he cried to the old Earl, "to bid this insolent skald and this upstart Einar out of your house. It is common talk amongst all men, even amongst the thralls in the garth, I have heard, that Einar comes here but to make love to Astrid under your very nose—to Astrid, whom you promised to me last year for the great service I did you once, and the friendship that is between us. And now he brings a singer of sagas, a reader of runes to his aid, and thinks to hit me where I have no chance of defence. Bid them out of your house, or by the Hammer of Thor I will drive them out at the sword's point!"

I sat silent whilst he raved out this speech, but before he had done Einar was on his feet, his eyes flashing, the famous longsword in his hand. And before Sweyn could speak, it flashed up and caught Hardrada's sidewise, and sent it spinning over the heads of the women.

"Thus I answer your accusations, Hard-skull," said Einar, "though it is true that I love Astrid, and also that I shall win her for my own in spite of you. Now get your sword again, and we will go holmgang* here and now, where you cannot get behind me, like the bullying *nithing* that you are, and we will test the truth of the skald's reading."

For all answer Hardrada seized his battle-axe from the hands of his man Alfdane and ran furiously towards Einar, who rushed in upon him with upraised blade. In another moment the two would have been engaged in a death struggle, but Sweyn's voice rose above the tumult of exclamation, and men sprang forward to do his bidding.

* Holmgang, single combat, generally fought on small islands in the fiords.

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"Cease!" cried the old Earl. "You are both my guests, and I cannot have your blood upon my floor. Hold them asunder, men, while their passion cools."

Strong arms round both drew them back and so held them, panting and glaring, until the Earl spoke again.

"If you must needs fight, Hardrada," he said, "at least let it not be until you are sure that Astrid would have you with Einar's blood on your hands. If you are jealous of this stalwart youth, whom I should look upon with favour but for the promise I made you, leave the matter to me. I am old and have seen much, Hardrada, and I tell you that there may be more in the skald's words than you think. Nay, even in spite of my promise, I will give Einar my daughter within a year from now, on one condition."

"Then you are no longer a friend of mine, Sweyn," said Hard-skull, morosely, as, released from the arms of the men, he put down his axe and leaned against the wall.

"You will say so no longer," said the old man with a grim smile, "when I tell you that condition. Einar shall wed my daughter Astrid, if she be willing, if he can capture the ship of Edred the Bearsark—the *Destroyer* herself—within a year from now. In proof thereof he must, within the year, bring me the ship here to Raven's-nest."

A silence fell upon them all at that, and tears started to Astrid's eyes, and a smile crept over Hardrada's flushed face. Edred the Bearsark was accounted, when in anger, the strongest man alive, and his ship was the largest and swiftest afloat. He scoured the seas as an evil spirit, preying alike upon innocent fishermen and upon ships heavy laden from Viking cruises, and though the hands of all were against him, he had yet escaped scatheless.

At first I feared for Einar, knowing his rashness, but when I saw his lips close firmly and the fire of a great resolve glow in his eyes, and noted how calmly he took the challenge, I was relieved. I remembered how his father, Harald, had won the wings in slaying the sea-wolf Valstran, and I doubted not the ability of the son, who wore the golden wings already, to do greater deeds.

"I agree to the condition," he said, sheathing his sword, and striding up to where Sweyn sat, the sunlight from the open doorway glinting on his mail and limning in golden relief the noble outlines of his stalwart form. "I vow before you, Sweyn, by all the Gods of Asgard, that I will not ask you for Astrid until I bring the *Destroyer*, as my own ship, up the fiord. And since Hardrada is your friend, he shall be safe from my anger henceforth unless he cross my path with malice. Need a man and a Viking say more, Earl Sweyn? Let us clasp hands in amity, and with to-morrow's dawn the *Eagle* sails."

Sweyn extended his hand to meet that of the brave young Norseman, as he could not help after so manly and forbearing a speech, and after they had grasped warmly, and he had bidden farewell to Astrid and to her mother Alfifa, Einar went proudly towards the doorway and passed through, and so down to the water-side, where his ship lay.

Algar and Brun, his two chief men, followed him, and the rest of us rose from the feast table so that the women might clear away the empty dishes. And I noticed that Astrid's tears had dried quickly, that she went about her household duties cheerfully, with seemingly never a care for the greedy gaze of Hardrada, which followed her everywhere. I made no doubt that she and Einar had already told each other the story of their love, and that, like a true Norse maiden, she believed Einar would do whatever he dared for her sake. And later in the day, while Hardrada was without, I sang thus to the maid:

Comes to the Yule feast,
Comes to stern Sweyn's house,
Hardrada the Hard-skull:
Seeking a love maid,
Seeking Sweyn's daughter,
Astrid the Beautiful.
'But Astrid loves Einar,'
Birds in the bushes sing.
Rats in the thatching squeak:
'Go back to Tvedestrof,
Hard-skull Hardrada!'

She blushed prettily at that, and those around us who caught the words laughed loud and long, and praised my wit.

Yet when all slept that night at Raven's-nest, I lay awake, restless, and thinking of Einar. So restless I was that when the first faint glow of the dawn crept from the portals of the east I rose and put on my laced sandals, and went out quietly into the morning.

I was not the first, however. It was near the cold season, and the lady-ferns in the hollows had turned to vivid red in the breath of the keen winds; but they were not half so red as the cheeks of fair Astrid when I overtook her in the home path beyond the garth, where the valley slopes down to the gravel shores of the lake on which the ships lay silent in the grey shadow of the cliff.

At another time I should have rejoiced in the beauty of the dawn; in the red-glow on the hill-tops, with patches of blue where the gentians clustered; in the sweet scent of the pink and white herbage of the vales; in the pearly glitter of the dewdrops on the spider-webbing of hemlock bough, spruce twig, and raspberry bush; in the wheeling and crying of the kestrels and buzzards on the crags yonder, where the lake narrows to a river between stupendous sides;

Leaning over the side he kissed his love before my eyes.

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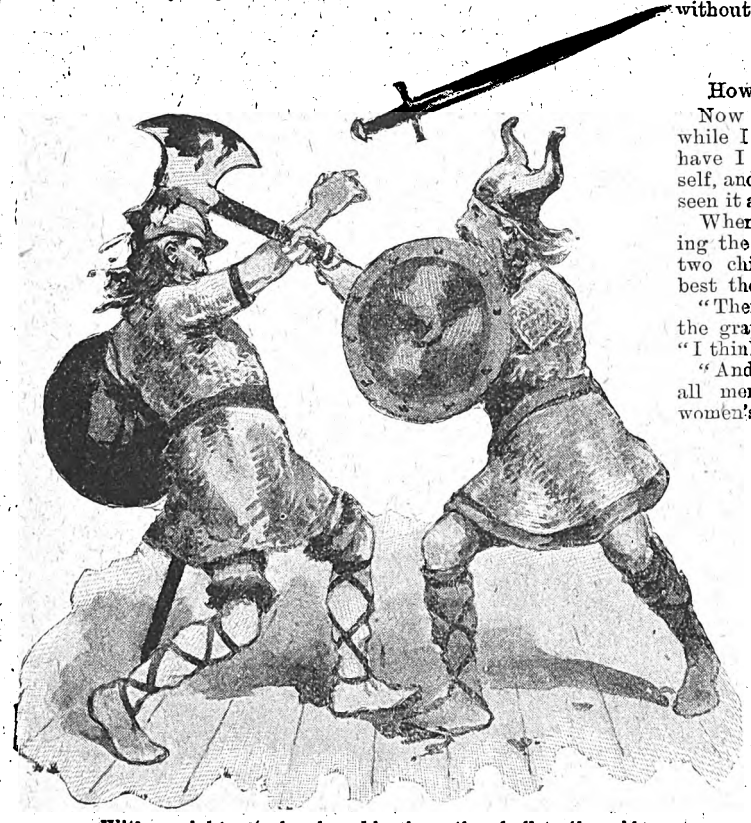
and when the sun at last arose, in the splendour of the golden rays running through the mesh of the meadow vapour; but now I heeded these things little.

Astrid, guilty Astrid, claimed all my gaze, as with ruddy cheeks, downcast eyes, and meek voice, the loose curls of her sunny hair flying out on the cool breeze like a glorious flame, she asked if I, too, were minded to bid Einar a last good-bye?

"Since you have confessed your errand, fair one," said I, marvelling not at Einar's determination nor at Hardrada's desire, "since you have told me why you are out so early, why, that was my intent. And since we are both of one resolve, we will go together. I will not stay too long."



With a mighty stroke clove him from the skull to the middle.

"You had ever a kindly heart, Sigmund," she said, and her merry laugh, that startled a whistling stint in a bush near by, was good to hear.

A white osprey, omen of good luck, circled high overhead as we went to the water's edge; and as though he knew of our coming, a boat lay beached on the margin, and Einar stood near it, alone.

I drew back then, and wandered a little way off along a birch coppice, until such time as I judged they had said farewell a sufficient number of times, and then I joined them. Their faces were bright and happy, though in Astrid's eyes glistened tears, and in Einar's was a shade of foreboding, and I thought that never had twain been so fitly put together by Baldar's hand.

The sun was fast getting up now, and I judged that we must be going back; so, after some words of warning and advice to Einar and a hearty clasp of hands, he stepped into the boat. Leaning over the side, he kissed his love before my eyes, and then, with a quick thrust of the red pine oars, pushed off into floating water.

We stood and watched the regular strokes of the blades as they broke the purple mirror of the lake's surface, and admired the action of his bare, muscular arms; saw him reach and board the ship, and the sailors let out the sails and put her before the wind. Until the lower cliffs hid her from sight we watched, then turned back towards the homestead.

As we went, I saw Alfdane, Hardrada's man, slinking behind a wall, and my mind misgave me, for I knew him to be the son of one of Valstran's men, whom Einar's father had slain. It was plain that he had spied upon us and thought himself undiscovered. But I said nothing of it to Astrid, and when we came to the house, all greeted us without suspicion.

CHAPTER II.

How Einar Rescued Othnar Wolf's-fang.

Now my story must of need go on with Einar while I stayed at home at Raven's-nest, but so often have I heard the tale from the lips of Einar himself, and others, that I can tell it as though I had seen it all with my own eyes.

When the *Eagle* was clear of the fiord, and threading the channels between the islands, Einar and his two chief men took counsel together as to how best they might come at Edred and overmaster him.

"There will be men's work to do when we throw the grapnel chains on the *Destroyer*," said Algar. "I think you did ill to dare such a task."

"And so think I," said Brun the Silent; "but all men must needs be guided to Valhalla by women's hands."

It was said of this Brun that he had never had a mother, so little he cared for women.

"Useless talk," said Einar. "We are already on the viking path, let it lead us where it will. As the Normas decree* so shall things happen."

"Then, since you are set on this," said Algar, "this is my rede: that we lie about the islands a week or more, until we hear tidings of the Bearsark, and that we attack him directly after he has done one of his red deeds, when he will be somewhat short of men and unfit for fight."

"It is a good saying, Algar," said Einar. "He is an outlaw, and no man can tell it to our discredit that we took him unfairly. But whom have we here?"

The men rushed to the bow of the *Eagle* and looked eagerly, for the galley had just rounded the sharp corner of Barenose Point, and in the quiet water behind it three ships were locked together, and their decks were bright with the waving of axes and swords, and there was a great shouting.

"Methinks there are some yonder who are getting their bane," quoth Algar, "and by their voices there are some we know. That was old Wolf's-fang's war-cry, I vow, and that was his man Ogen."

"It is Othnar Wolf's-fang's ship, truly," said Brun, "and he seems in dire peril."

"Then little as I like, now, we must go to help him," said Einar. "It shall never be said that we let a neighbour of Sweyn's die for want of our arms. And it is a nithing's deed to attack one ship with two. Hasten, men, here is plenty of practise for our skill, and they are pressing our friends hard."

The sturdy vikings sent the *Eagle* plunging swiftly through the clear water, raising a curl of creamy froth before her prow, and as she crashed into the side of the

* Note.—The Normas were the three Fates of the Norse mythology.

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nearmost galley, Einar leapt aboard her with upraised blade, Algar and Brun followed him, and others made the ships fast.

The men of Thorod, a viking whom men named the Unforgiving, who had waylain Othnar because of an old blood feud, gave back in confusion before the onset of Einar. Never was sword in Norseland so keen as Longsword; never was sword that shone so blue and vivid before men's eyes. It dazzled them as it flashed in the sun, and when the glare left their eyes they were stretched in death. Algar and Brun, with their heavy axes, came labouring behind, guarding his back, and so Einar soon won through the press to Othnar's side.

"You come none too soon, Einar Longsword," said he, sweeping down an enemy with his huge axe as he spoke. "Thorod's men are too many for us, and but for help we should have been mounting Bifrost's rainbow bridge to-night. How came you here?"

"Deeds first—talk after," said Einar, plying Longsword on the foe. "Let us get this work done as soon as may be. Here comes Thorod, mad as a Bearsark; see to him."

The fight was renewed in deadly earnest. The crews of Einar and Othnar together were greater than the crews of Thorod, but the latter were brave men, and desperate, and for awhile the fray held even. Many champions were sent to Odin before it was seen that the men of the north were winning, and still Thorod's vikings strove on. Algar slew Verg and Audun, and Brun sent Ragnor Keen-eyes to Valhalla, and Thorfin, Thorod's son, wounded Algar almost to the death before Einar could stay him.

It went hard with Thorfin when Longsword shone between his eyes, and his father saw him fall just as he reeled from the strokes of Othnar's ruddy axe. The sight put new life into Thorod's weary arms. He set upon Othnar desperately, raining his blows so fast and furious that Wolf's-fang gave way, and at last was driven to put his shoulders to the mast, finding it all his work to defend himself.

Now men stayed their hands to watch them, and Othnar cried, between the cautious sweeps of his heavy weapon:

"My life against this red-hand's, for the liegeship of you all!"

Thorod the Unforgiving glared assent as he wielded his blade, and there was silence, save for the clashing of steel between those two. At last Othnar gained the advantage and drove Thorod before him, but just as his axe was lifted for the ending blow, one of Thorod's men kicked a sword in his path, Othnar's right foot was caught by its sharp edge, the blood spurted suddenly from the wound, and as he fell headlong to the deck the axe slipped from his grasp.

"A coward's deed!" cried many, and Einar sprang forward before Thorod could close with his fallen enemy, and dealt him a blow under the ear that sent him staggering half-way across the ship. The blow saved Othnar's life. Before his foe could recover himself Wolf's-fang held his axe again and was upon him, and with a mighty stroke that all marvelled at, clove him from the skull to the middle, through helm and byrnie and mail.

A great cry rose from Thorod's men at that, and some were for striving on and some were for going over to Othnar's service because of the right of combat. They could not agree amongst themselves, but Einar, who had somewhat of a lawman's tongue, gave them good counsel.

"You are Othnar's men now, by right of conquest," said he, "but I doubt not that he will give you your choice, either to follow him or to turn about in peace and go your own way. It is ill to keep men who might turn traitors. If you will not listen to this, and are set on more slaying, why, here are some of us ready to show you how."

To this advice Wolf's-fang readily consented, being scarcely able to walk now for the pain in his foot, and the end of it was that about forty men chose to serve under him, and the rest took the grappling chains from their battered ships and made sail southwards, though some of these, because of the slaying of Thorfin, threatened vengeance on Einar and his crew.

It was growing dusk when their dragons vanished into the blue immensity of ocean, and Einar stayed with Wolf's-fang until the next morning, hearing all the news that Othnar's men could remember of the southern waters, and particularly of Edred's doings. But when Othnar heard of Einar's intention he sat thoughtfully silent awhile, stroking his beard. Then a smile crept over his face.

"It was like Sweyn, if he yet be as I remember him," said Othnar, "to set you such a task, and foolish of you to accept it, but since what is done is done, we must take counsel of Loki. This Edred is outlawed, and therefore cannot be met on equal terms. A year is a long time, and if you cruise about the coasts carefully and keep your ears open you will not have to wait many weeks for some red deed of his. Then, when his crew are tired, and before the wounded have time to get well, will be your chance to fall upon him unawares. And if it happens that I am within call, then I shall be glad to give my help."

They came together, whitetlaked with snow

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"The first part of your advice is like Algar's, and suits me," said Einar, "but as to the last, it cannot be. I must do this deed alone with my own men."

"As you will," said Othnar, "but you will some day find my rede a good one."

And then he grew serious again, and while Einar's men made the *Eagle* ready for sail, looked first at Longsword and then out across the sea as though wishing to speak yet not knowing how to find words. At last he cast hesitation to the wind and said:

"It is strange that Hardrada should have shown face at Raven's-nest if the rumour that I heard at Sogn be true. But perchance he has been so long in Iceland that he has forgotten you. He must have bound his men over to silence when he found out your parentage and your friendship at Sweyn's house. I fancy that if he be there when I sit down at Sweyn's table he will not stay long."

"No man's will I be but his."

"What was the rumour?" asked Einar. "I know not why he should be an enemy of mine, excepting for Astrid's sake."

"It was told me at Sogn," said Othnar, "that Hardrada was the brother of that Turgrimm whom your father slew at Nidaros, and that he had long bided his time to pay the debt. They said that he had put in at North-hold with his galley prepared for war, but whether he won the fight or was beaten off was not known. He is alive, you say."

Einar's face grew pale, then dark with fierce anger. Algar and Brun felt the edges of their polished axes.

"He is alive, but only until I can get within spear's throw of him," said Einar. "If the rumour that he put in at North-hold be true, his life is forfeit to me because he would never have escaped my father Harald, had he not succeeded too well. Be speedy with the ship men; we shall not need to go so far for more fighting after all."

"Where to now?" asked Wolf's-fang.

"Where to but back to Raven's-nest, to drag that wretch's carcase out of the house," said Einar sternly.

"Now I have seen much," said Othnar, laying his hand on the young man's shoulder and looking earnestly into his eyes, "and I advise you three things. First, that you go to North-hold yourself and see if this tale be true; next, that you find Edred and fulfil your vow, whatever you discover at home; and last, if vengeance be necessary, to take it. In the meantime, when my foot is cured, which a few days' rest here will do, I will go up to Raven's-nest myself—'tis years since I saw Sweyn—and spoil that nest for at least one of the birds sitting there. Now sail north or south as you will."

"'Tis sound advice, but goes ill with one hot for action," said Einar after a moment's pause. "Nevertheless, I will do as you say. My wrath will not cool in a day. But since I am going by your word, Othnar Wolf's-fang, I claim your help if I should need it."

"That you shall have, friend Einar, and though I am growing sere, as you saw yesterday, I can still show some the way to Valhalla," said Othnar.

Then Einar went on board the *Eagle* and put his hand upon the tiller, and the shield-hung galley sailed out of the shadow of the island cliffs into the glare of the open sea.

CHAPTER III.

What Befell at Raven's-nest.

It was quiet at Raven's-nest after Einar had sailed, and I think Alfifa, Sweyn's wife, upbraided her husband sorely for having sent Astrid's lover to his death. At first he listened to her, but in a day or so he listened to Hardrada instead, remembering his promise, for Sweyn was a great stickler for his word.

"If Einar be of the muscle I take him to be," said he to me, "he will do what I set him to do. If not, he will die nobly, and the Valkyrs will have but chosen him some few years sooner. What say you, Sigmund?"

"You could not have spoken better," said I, looking at Astrid meaningly. Hardrada caught the glance from across the hall, and it set him thinking. It was nearly a week since Einar's going, and he had made no progress in his wooing of Astrid. She used every artifice known to women—and there are not few—to avoid his presence and his flatteries, and in this was well aided by Alfifa, and Hardrada grew desperate. Moreover, he dreaded the news of what he had done at North-hold getting afloat, for he found that the people of Harald and Sweyn were great friends. So one day, after speaking long with Sweyn, he caught Astrid alone.

He came upon her one evening when the snow was falling fast, and she had no excuse, but must return home with him. And withal he was so long and awkward in the telling of

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his love, when he at last plucked up courage to speak of it, that Astrid laughed in his face and bade him go make such an offer of wedlock to the old carline, Helga, who had sat beside the ingle in her father's hall ever since she could remember.

Hard-skull was angered at her light insolence, for he thought his wealth and her father's wish would have carried weight now Einar was away, and instead of continuing his suit, he lost his temper.

"You are a silly girl," said he, "and Tyr will be lenient if your perverseness does not bring you to trouble. You need not keep Einar in your head, for his you will never be."

"His I shall be, or no other man's," said Astrid bravely. "And as to you, Hard-skull, I think no more of you than I do of my father's meanest servant."

They walked the rest of the way without speaking, and came together, whiteflaked with snow, into the hall. I saw the glower on Hardrada's face, and I knew that he had been rebuffed, and I laughed to myself.

Nothing of note was said that night, but next morning, after a long talk with his man, Alfdane—who was reputed to be a wereman, and was disliked by all of us—Hardrada rose from the feast-table and called his men to go her, saying that it was time they were gone. No one bade them linger, though Sweyn stared astonished, and so they went down to the *Vulture* and put off.

We saw them out of sight round the lower cliffs and were turning away, when the peak sails of another ship shone white against the clear blue of the sky. We heard the echo of their passing greeting ring along the crags, and when the fresh vessel came nearer we saw that it was the *Long Dragon* of Othnar Wolf's-fang.

A great welcome was made ready at once, for Othnar, of Trollfell—which was the nearest garth to Raven's-nest—was a good neighbour, albeit he did not visit us too often. He was a great, heavy-jawed man, with one huge tooth outgrown on the left side of his mouth (which had got him his name), and an abundance of iron-grey hair, and I noticed that he limped as he stepped to shore, and looked marvellously chagrined.

And the look of chagrin was still on his face when he sat to meat, so that Sweyn bade him out with what was troubling him.

"Have you come to seek men to aid you in a quarrel?" asked the stern Earl. "We have men here, and to spare, for any wild work that may want doing."

"Nay," said Othnar, resting his eyes on Alfifa and Astrid, "I have come for no men, for I have plenty, but methinks had I come for fair women I need go no further. Nay, Sweyn, I was but put out because I came too late. You had a guest last night. By Tyr, I would have liked to have speech with him before you!"

"And what do you know of Hardrada Hard-skull?" one asked.

"I know much," said Othnar, and told us how he had met Einar and what he had heard of Hardrada's doings.

At the news of Einar there went up a shout of applause that shook the dust from the seasoned rafters, but at the other story there were silent lips and stern faces. To us Othnar told it as a truth and not as a rumour, saying that he had it direct from a thrall of Harald's, who had escaped to Sogn.

When the tale was done we sat awhile, looking at each other, for surely there would be much blood come of such a foul deed, and no man knew where it would end. Then old Sweyn raised his hand aloft and vowed by Odin that henceforth Hardrada should be no friend of his.

"I will bid the farm men drive him out with sticks comes he here again," said the stern Earl. "For his silence I consider my promise to him revoked. He shall wed no daughter of mine and thine, Alfifa."

"Spoken like a man, Sweyn!" cried Othnar, made garrulous by the ale. "Thy fair Astrid is too fair for an ordinary man, still less a nithing and a woman-killer. Indeed, thy Astrid is very fair, and I begrudge even Einar."

At this some laughed, but Astrid, though smiling at her father's words, blushed and went out.

This was Othnar's weakness, that he was overfond of fair faces and unstable in his desires; and I said to myself that Einar was rid of one rival but to have another, and one more likely to be troublesome.

The snow came thickly the following few days, and most of us kept to the house, roasting ourselves before the great log fire that cast a red glare into all the corners of the hall.

For my part, I was kept busy telling all the sagas that I knew until my throat was so hoarse that I was glad when the downfall ceased, and the men took wrestling shoes and went out to exercise their muscles in the bright, bracing air. But ever as I told my stories I kept an eye upon Othnar Wolf's-fang, and I saw that day by day the desire for Astrid was getting stronger mastery over him.

I saw, too, that Sweyn the Stern took kindly to him, and that even Alfifa did not treat him so distantly as she had treated Hardrada.

Othnar was wealthy and a generous man, who had done no unusually red deeds, and, but for the great tooth that grew out of his jaw, a man of fine presence. And when, at the after-Yule feast, the Earl promised Astrid to him if Einar did not return successful within the year, he went about as a man upon whom Bragi, god of leasure, smiled.

His infatuation outran his patience, and on the last day of his visit, having made all ready to go over Saddleback Ridge to his own garth at Trollfell—some of his men having already sailed in the *Long Dragon*—he sought Astrid alone and told her his desire.

Astrid listened silently, for he was a better suitor than Hard-skull, and spoke more smoothly, perchance because he knew more of such things than most men, but when he had finished, her answer was the same.

"I am not disdainful of the honour you would give me, neighbour," said she, proudly, "but I hold it even a greater honour that Einar Longsword has spoken love words to me. No man's will I be but his, whether he be living or dead at the year's end. Rather will I leave my father's house and go forth as a *vala*, and put from me all thoughts of men, than be untrue to Einar. But Einar will come back victorious, never fear, Othnar; and for the service he did you you will welcome him and say no more of this."

Now she spoke so sweetly, and her golden hair shone so glorious in the flashing of the northern lights across the snow, that Wolf's-fang's desire grew greater, and he was blinded to his true duty.

"I care not what service the young cub may have rendered me," he cried, seizing the girl's hands in a strong grasp, "he is an enemy of mine so long as you love him. And think not that he is proof against sword and axe, foolish one. There was a were-woman on the island where I stayed to heal the wound in my foot, and I asked her concerning his quest. She consulted her trolls, and replied that though she could not see to the end, she saw him pass through much fighting and storm, and at last fall, a captive, into Hardrada's hands. And that, surely, will be the end. So think no more of him, Astrid, but of me. And before I go, sweet——"

He drew her swiftly towards him, seeking to kiss her, but she wrenched her right hand free and dealt him such a stinging stroke across the face that he let her go, and the blood rushed redly under his tanned skin.

"You are a fury after all," said he, carried away by mortification and passion, because just then I approached; "and now you have done Einar an evil turn indeed. I give you good-day, Astrid, until the year be out. And to you good-day also, Sigmund, the eavesdropper."

(To be continued.)

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "A Maori Maid," by Harry B. Vogel, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. E. Long, 17 Grey Rock Street, Liverpool. Attempts for this week's prize must deal with FUNNY STORIES ABOUT BIRDS, and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, June 25th, Post-cards only, please.

Then They All Laughed.

In the court-house a tramp stood charged with stealing a watch.

He stoutly denied the impeachment, and brought a counter accusation against his accuser for assault committed with a frying-pan.

The judge was inclined to take a common sense view of the case, and, regarding the prisoner, said:

"Why did you allow the prosecutor, who is a smaller man than yourself, to assault you without resistance? Had you nothing in your hand to defend yourself?"

"Bedad, your honour," answered the tramp, "I had his watch, but what was that against a fryin'-pan?"

E. L.

The X-Rays.

"I'd take it as a charity, mum," exclaimed a tramp; "just a slice of bread and a drink of water from a milky bowl."

"Well, just lie down till I see if you are hungry," said the lady of the house. "I will take a picture of what you've had for dinner before I give you anything."

"I'se heard tell of dese X-rays, mum," returned the tramp. "I'll own up to have had a chicken for dinner. But, mum, does yer believe that they could git a good nuff likeness of the chicken to enable the owner ter recognise 'im?"

P. G.

No Change this Time.

A gentleman, while walking with two ladies through one of the principal streets of London, saw a beggar approach.

One of the ladies, who had evidently seen the mendicant before, said:

"This is the most singular man I ever heard of. No matter how much money you give him he always returns the change, and never keeps more than a penny."

"Why, what a fool he must be," remarked the gentleman. "But I'll try him, and put him to a little trouble."

So saying, the gentleman pulled from his pocket a sovereign, which he dropped into the beggar's hat.

The mendicant turned the coin over two or three times, examined it closely, and then, raising his eyes to the countenance of the benevolent man, said:

"Well, I'll not adhere to my usual custom in this case. I'll keep it all for luck, but don't do it again."

The donor opened his eyes in astonishment and passed on, while the ladies smiled with delight.

M. E. R.

Not What She Expected.

"Don't you know it is against the law to beg for money?" said the lady to the tramp at the back door.

"I wasn't goin' to beg for money, ma'am," was the reply of the humble wanderer.

"It's just as bad to beg for bread."

"I wasn't goin' to beg for bread, ma'am."

"What were you going to beg for then, pray?"

"Only for one of your photographs, ma'am!"

E. C.

He Gave Him a Tip.

A Yorkshire tradesman was one day busy at his desk when a poor, broken-down looking man came and asked for relief.

The tradesman refused him, and ordered him out of the place.

The tramp, however, persisted, saying that for sixpence he would tell him something which might some day be of great value to him.

Thinking the man might know something which it would pay him to know, he gave the man the sixpence.

The tramp looked round to see that no one was within hearing, then whispered in his ear:

"If iver tha' gets i' gaol, an' 'as to tread th' mill, tak' th' side nearest to t' wall. I've tried it mesel', an' tha'll find it th' easiest."

"I Thowt I Felt a Hop."

A tramp went into a public-house one day and asked for a mug of beer in a great hurry, saying that he was so dry he thowt he could drink a gallon.

The publican told him that if he would drink it at one draught, without taking the measure away from his lips, he should have it for nothing.

"Agraid," said Pat, "and, be the howly Saint Pathrick, I'll do that same."

The landlord then drew a big measure of ale, and, slyly slipping a red herring into the measure, handed it to him.

Pat eagerly raised it to his mouth, and drank away until the measure had been elevated almost perpendicular.

The publican's eyes followed the motion in astonishment, and, looking in it, he exclaimed, shaking the froth out:

"Pat, didn't you feel anything going down with the beer when you drank it?"

"Be the powers," said Pat, "I thowt I felt a hop, sur!"

M. E.

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Misconstrued her Action.

STROLLING down a country lane one hot afternoon a spinster of unprepossessing appearance observed a tramp asleep on the ground, with his bare head exposed to the full glare of the tropical sun.

"Poor fellow, he will have a sunstroke," she murmured compassionately. "I will shade him with my parasol, and sit on this stile till he wakes up."

She placed the parasol in such a position that it completely hid the tramp's shock head, and stuck patiently on the stile for quite an hour. At the expiration of that time some cattle came past, and their lowing awoke the tramp, who pushed aside the parasol and stared sleepily at the spinster.

"I say, mum," he growled, "hadn't yer better hide behind this thingumgig yerself? The cows are used to my face, but they're pretty sure to shy at yours!"

R. A. H. G.

Turning the Tables.

IN Coventry a few weeks ago a poorly-clad tramp entered a shop and asked the miserly shopkeeper if he could assist him.

The master, wishing to play a practical joke upon an acquaintance who was admiring some goods at the other end of the shop, said to the tramp:

"Ask that gentleman, he's the master."

The beggar immediately turned to him and said:

"Please, sir, could you help a poor man who is weak and hungry for want of food?"

The gentleman, who had overheard the shopkeeper's allusion to himself, turned to the poor man and said:

"Are you really hungry?"

"I am, indeed, sir," answered the man, with tears in his eyes.

Much to the astonishment of the shopkeeper, the gentleman went round the counter, took a florin from the till, and handing it to the beggar, he told him to go and buy a dinner; then, turning to the shopkeeper, who had suddenly become speechless, he said:

"Thank you, my friend. I did not know before that I owned a shop," and calmly walked from the place.

F. W. F.

The Professor's Chickens.

THIS may not be new, but it was new to the writer who overheard it recently, so it is likely that there are others to whom it will be fresh. The young man who told it was evidently a collegian, as was his companion.

"I heard a good one about Prof. M.," he said.

"What was it?" queried the other.

"Well, you know he was married during the winter and went to housekeeping just outside the village. This spring he thought he would add a few hens to his stock; he already had a dog. He set a couple of the hens, and in time had two large broods of chickens. He was very proud of them, but in a week or so the chickens began to die. He called in a neighbour to look at them and offer advice. They were certainly a pretty scaly lot of chickens that the neighbour viewed. They were skinny-looking and apparently without ambition.

"'What do you feed them on?' asked the neighbour, after a brief survey.

"'Feed them?' responded the professor, as though he didn't hear aright. 'Why, I don't feed them on anything. I thought the old hens had milk enough for them.'"

H. M.

A Cute Tramp.

A TRAMP passing through a village and having a bad threepenny-piece in his pocket, entered a small shop and asked for a threepenny cigar, for which he tendered the spurious coin.

Asking for a match he lighted the cigar at the counter and marched off.

Hardly had he gone when the proprietress discovered that the coin was bad, and, running to the door and holding up the coin, she cried:

"Hey, man, come back; it's a bad one."

"Yes, I know it is," was the cool reply, "but seeing it's lighted, I'll smoke it now, if it kills me."

F. F.

Both Boys and Elephant Fooled.

THIRTY years ago one of the famous elephants that travelled in this country was Jumbo. During one of his summer trips through the provinces, he stopped at the town of Bradford. In the neighbouring town of Leeds, a boy familiarly called "Dave," and notorious for leadership in all kinds of mischievous tricks, determined to show off before the other boys at Jumbo's expense, and invited several of his companions to go with him.

Having come to the elephant's stable, Dave gave him first some sweets, and then cake, and finally cried; "Now, boys," and slipped a piece of tobacco into his proboscis, intending to get out of danger and enjoy Jumbo's disgust and anger.

But before he could move, Jumbo seized him and whirled him upward through the opening overhead against the roof of the stable.

Unhurt by his unexpected "rise," Dave dropped on to a haystack. The other boys below, supposing this to be the "trick" promised them, cried out in admiration.

"Dave, Dave, do that again!"

Dave, comfortably seated out of harm's way, earnestly answered:

"No, boys! I only do that trick once a day!"

Not a Servant After All.

HOUSEKEEPER (to pleasant-faced girl at employment agency): "Have you any objection to the country?"

Girl (politely): "None at all, madam."

Housekeeper: "I have a large family."

Girl: "The more the merrier."

Housekeeper: "Seven children, two of them quite young."

Girl: "I love little children."

Housekeeper: "It will be necessary for you to bake bread, wash, and get the meals. I attend to the pastry and chamberwork myself.

Girl: "I will also make the pastry and do the rest, if you will allow me.'

Housekeeper: "I cannot give you more than three afternoons off."

Girl: "Two will be sufficient—perhaps more than I will want—as my plan is to give strict attention to my household duties, and thus get the work done up promptly every day so as to have plenty of opportunities to rest between times."

Housekeeper: "I am delighted——"

Stranger (suddenly entering): "Sorry to interrupt you, madam, but you are conversing with one of my patients who has just escaped from the Hopelessly Incurable Lunatic Asylum."

L. V.

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Beauty and the Sage.

THE Sage ran his fingers through his hair until it stood on end, and endowed him with a positive air of aggression entirely foreign to his usual appearance.

Having performed which act, he allowed his eyes to wander round the portion of his household goods contained in his study, in a vague sort of hope that they would inspire him with an outlet to the quandary in which he found himself.

The stern-looking old bureau, upon which his eyes first alighted, utterly repudiated any responsibility in the matter. In fact, it seemed to take a malicious delight in adding to his dilemma by drawing attention to the heterogenous litter of paper, bottles, cigars, and other things which covered its dignified top. Table and chairs told the same tale of muddle.

Somehow everything in the Sage's room seemed to have developed a faculty for getting where it ought not to have been. At least, he put it to himself in that light to quell the pricking of his awakening conscience which began to whisper that it was afraid he was an untidy man.

He picked up the letter which had started this train of reasoning, and, smoothing out the creases ,re-read it, repeating the words slowly as though to fix them firmly in his mind.

"DEAR GUARDIAN,—I am inclosing my father's letter to you, and, if you will have me, I will try to give as little trouble as possible.

"Your affectionate ward,

"GLADYS LUSHINGTON."

The inclosure the writer referred to, was from an old friend of younger days who had played the part of David to Professor Welford's Jonathan. They had drifted apart for nearly twenty years before, because a lucrative appointment was offered to George Lushington in the Congo Free State. He had married a Belgian lady there, who presented him with a daughter, and shortly afterwards died.

All this the Sage had learnt by letter, for the old time friends had never met since their first parting.

Now by the inclosure the Sage heard that George Lushington was to head an expedition with the object of dragging from the heart of Central Africa some of its many secrets, and as it was not fit that his daughter should remain in a half savage town unprotected, he suggested that she should come and look after his old friend, bringing a sufficient sum of money to share the household expenses.

"If she makes you half as loving a ward as she has me a daughter, you will be a happy man, my dear Welford," concluded Lushington's letter. The partiality of a father evidently leading the writer to suppose that he was conferring a benefit rather than receiving one.

"It is most annoying," remarked the professor continuing his cogitations. "I know she will be possessed by the demon of clearing up. They all are. They cannot help it. It's an integral part of their nature. A girl of twelve can no more see an article put down in one place without an overwhelming desire seizing her to transfer it to another, than a small boy can resist the invitation of a particularly bright bell knob and plate which begs him to 'knock also.'

"The unfortunate part of the business is that whereas the desire to substitute 'He who *rings* and runs away, will live to *ring* another day,' for the old couplet, as generally read, dies whilst the boy is yet very young, (usually at about twenty-one) the epidemic of cleaning up gets stronger as the girl grows to womanhood."

I may here say that though the Sage's knowledge of young men was extensive and peculiar owing to the vagaries of the students who sat under him, he knew

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about as much of women, young or old, as a crocodile does of hair-pins.

A brilliant idea suddenly struck the Sage.

"Why, of course she cannot come here," he said to himself, "it would offend the proprieties. Why, I am only forty. Let me see—yes—forty-five! Altogether too young a man to act as a parent to a girl of twenty!"

Fired with an admiration for Mrs. Grundy which was none the less intense because so suddenly conceived, the Sage rose from his chair to pace up and down, whilst he mentally composed a letter to his old friend which would, whilst stating his scruples, yet not give cause for offence.

He gleefully whistled as he strode to and fro, until suddenly he caught a reflection of himself in the pier glass above the mantelpiece, and stopped short, with the chuckle which had been trembling on his lips frozen into a groan.

It was many years since the Sage had really inspected his personal appearance. His visits to the looking-glass had been confined to those rare intervals when he got a hair or some other foreign substance in his eye, and one's feelings at such a moment are not conducive to a close inspection of anything but the injured member.

The Sage contemplated the many grey patches which stained his head, and gave up counting the wrinkles after he had disposed of twelve. Then turned away dejectedly and inwardly muttered:

"No, that bird will not fly. I may not feel old enough to accept the responsibility of a grown-up daughter; but I look sufficiently ancient to be the father of six."

So the plea of youth was never entered, and the Sage found no other.

He could not truthfully say he had no room for her, because he lived in a large house he had inherited from a relative, and the only occupants beside himself were the old married couple who attended to his simple wants.

He had ample means for two; besides her father especially mentioned that she would be no source of expense to him. No, there was nothing for it. She must come; and, after all, the Sage felt that it would be very sad for this young girl to arrive in England with nobody to welcome or look after her.

In reality, the Sage had a very tender heart, so the letter that eventually went to George Lushington was one which promised to do all in his power to make Gladys happy during her stay with him.

Having dispatched this, he determined to mend his ways as regards neatness, commencing his course of self-denial by transferring the Coal Purdonium from the chair which he usually kept by his desk so that he could replenish the fire without rising, to the couch; and when he found it still offended his eyes, transplanting it to the bureau, pushing the bottles, papers and cigars therein into a still more unsightly heap to make room.

In due course Gladys Lushington arrived and speedily fulfilled the Sage's worst fears as regards "clearing up."

He had intended to put his foot down on any attempts to tidy his study, even going to the extent of rehearsing a little speech which was to run:

"Now, my dear child, work out your destiny as a woman so far as every other room in the house is concerned, but spare this one."

This is what he intended to say, but when she walked in one day with a duster and a liberal supply of labels which she promptly affixed to the drawers of his writing desk, placing each separate article in its proper place, he sat by meekly without uttering a word. In fact he caught himself watching her pretty imperious movements with admiring eyes.

It was Gladys Lushington's prerogative to rule everybody with whom she came into contact, and the strange part of it was that, unlike most rulers, one seemed to like her the better when one came under her subjugation.

She was that strange anomaly—a loveable tyrant. Capable of subduing anything—even a medical student, which latter is considered the toughest piece of work tyrants, no matter of what gender, can lay themselves out to accomplish.

Only once did the Sage approach rebellion; that was when she bought a waste-paper basket and placed it under his desk with the idea that he should put it to the use for which such a necessary article is intended. Mr. Welford turned it upside down and found it made a most excellent foot-rest. When she came in later in the day she found the usual litter which had grated upon her orderly soul.

The Sage left his seat as she entered and took up a strategical position in front of the fire.

An Englishman always assumes that situation when he is going to assert his right to do as he likes in his own house.

Incipient insubordination sparkled in his eyes; a flood of rhetoric regarding the demon of clearing-up, trembled on his lips, yet the storm never broke.

For with womanly intuition she read the signs, and like a wise reformer declined to argue when she could act.

With not the ghost of a sign that it was anything out of the ordinary she sank on her knees, turned the waste-paper basket the right way up and started to reduce the chaos to order.

He stood it for two minutes, and then positively vacated the vantage-ground afforded by the fire, and kneeling down by her side assisted in his own final enthralment.

It was about this time that the Sage found that the elder students frequently had knotty problems which required solving during the evenings. With profuse apologies for troubling him out of University hours they presented themselves and their tangles at his house, enduring with praiseworthy patience his long explanations (wily youths) providing they could sit and watch Gladys reading or working. Then sometimes the Sage would ask them to remain to supper, which sent them into the "seventh heaven of delight," because it meant listening to her music or engaging her in a contest at chess, in which they made absurd moves which laid them open to scholar's mate several times in succession.

They were quite sure the Sage did not suspect the real cause underlying their assiduous desire for knowledge.

It is one of the phases of love that a man or woman who is in that condition always thinks his or her complaint is securely hidden from the outside world, whereas the disease always gives most unmistakable outward signs to onlookers. Perhaps in this case the Sage—being as his *nom-de-plume* implies a very wise man—might not have guessed, had not the iron entered his own soul.

After having bade his visitors good-night he would retire to his own room, and taking her portrait from the

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place of honour which it occupied, pour out words of passionate love. You see his heart was younger by very many years than his actual age warranted. Yet never in his wildest dreams did he think of ever asking her to link her young life to his. The feelings involved were too reverential. It would have seemed a sacrilege to have conveyed by word or look the slightest inkling of his real feelings. He was quite content to worship her in secret with no desire that she should give him anything beyond calm friendship.

To the world there was no apparent change in him. He was still the staid, methodical scholar, who looked so many years older than he really was; yet for one hour out of the twenty-four he was a gallant young buck brimful of life, loving a fayre ladye; willing to do battle for a mere glance of approval from her bright eyes; or to lay down his life in her service.

He came to live for that one hour, and although he did some very silly things I cannot sneer at him. I can even forgive him for making a surreptitious visit to a strange tailor to have some garments made in the style affected by modern youth; for they were only to wear during that precious hour to add to the illusion. He even bought a raven hair-dye, but, am glad to say, never used it.

But enough—a man's first love for a woman is sacred even though he be forty-five, and older for his years.

He had to take a good deal of punishment one way and another.

Four times in one week he was led apart from his fellows by as many young men in single numbers, who confided to him, with a great air of mystery, that they were madly in love with his ward; and begged him to try and find out if there were the slightest hope for them.

They were one and all inwardly surprised at the amount of sympathy which he displayed, and little guessed the effort of disinterestedness which he had to summon up to bid them try their fate.

No doubt they all did, but as he heard nothing more from them it is safe to assume that from their point of view, no good result came.

Of course, according to all the recognised canons of love stories, Gladys should have overlooked his grey hairs and wrinkles, and fallen in love with him.

But the regrettable fact remains that she did not.

One day some bolder lover—or shall we say, one more sure of his ground—than the preceding four, put his fortunes to the test without going through the preliminary of first asking the Sage's opinion.

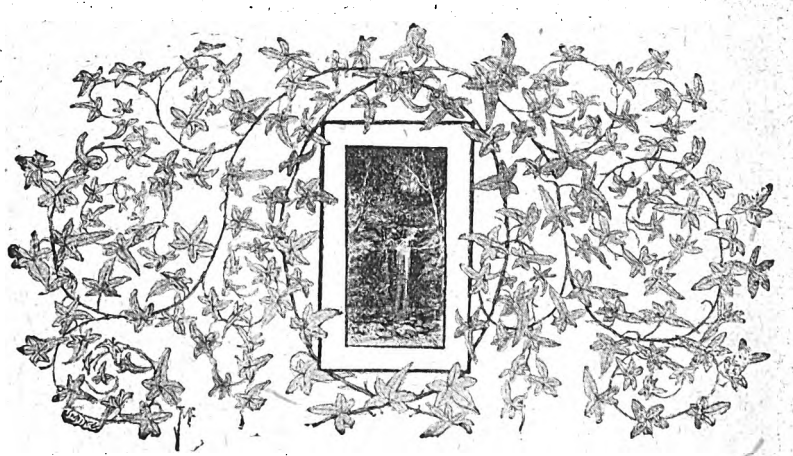
He knew what it meant when they came to him hand in hand, and mustered up sufficient courage to wish them every good fortune and to promise his good offices with the respective parents. There was not a tremour in his voice. But he nearly broke down when she bent over to kiss him, and whispered:

"Thank you so much—I love him so——".

There was no playing at being young by the Sage that night.

Even illusions deliberately conjured up by one's-self, have their limitations.

MARTIN-HARRY.



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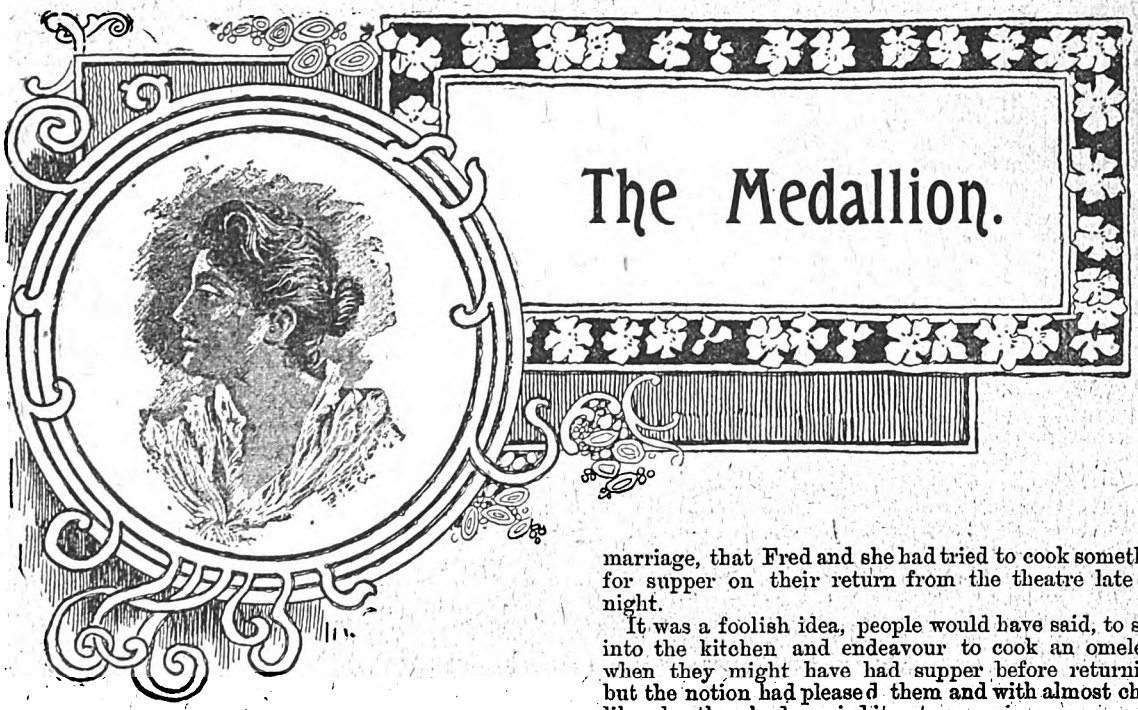

The Medallion.

THE patient's lips moved, but no words were audible. The trained nurse glided to the side of the bed and bent over the sick woman.

Once more the white lips moved and the nurse caught the words:

"Something—to drink."

"Yes," said the nurse softly. "I will get you something warm. I will not be long."

The nurse went swiftly into an adjoining room, where she expected to find all that she required; but to her sur rise and annoyance she discovered that the servants had not done their duty, and that it would be necessary for her either to arouse one, or to go downstairs herself.

She reflected that it would take longer to get a maid down to the room and fetch what was required than to do the work herself, and she decided that as she knew the house well she would go into the kitchen and prepare the beverage without troubling any one of the household.

As she knew the house well! Ah, no one suspected how well she knew it and the memories that it awakened within her!

As she made her way into the passage and down the wide staircase into the servants' quarters, her mind went back to the happiness of the old days and the bitterness of the years that followed the time when she left the house. It was the irony of fate that she should return to it, even temporarily, in her present capacity.

Absorbed in these thoughts she had reached the kitchen without being aware of it and had come to a standstill before a gas stove. Her inactivity brought her back to herself with a start and she set about preparing the drink for her patient. But again her mind wandered backwards.

It was in this kitchen many years ago, soon after her marriage, that Fred and she had tried to cook something for supper on their return from the theatre late one night.

It was a foolish idea, people would have said, to steal into the kitchen and endeavour to cook an omelette, when they might have had supper before returning; but the notion had pleased them and with almost child-like glee they had carried it out.

They had made rather a hash of it, as she remembered—with tenderness, and almost with a smile, in spite of the misery of after years. She had cut her thumb in an attempt to chop a little parsley with a big knife, which had delayed the culinary operations, Fred had carefully bound up the injured thumb with a strip from his own handkerchief, and after a little comfort and consolation administered by him, they had finished the cooking of the supper and had partaken of it with great relish.

She stood listlessly gazing vacantly towards the other end of the kitchen while the beverage was warming on the stove. She came slowly back to herself again, wondering who was approaching. Yes there were steps somewhere, she could hardly tell whether the sound came from within or without. It was someone passing in the front, she told herself, and poured out the refreshing drink, and noting with some annoyance that she had allowed it to become much too hot. She must not allow her thoughts to interfere with her duties.

Hark! Someone was certainly approaching and she was now sure that the sound came from the back of the house. Footsteps were sounding quite close to the kitchen window, and she remembered for the first time that she had not lighted the gas, but had found her way in the dark. There was consequently nothing to show the new-comer that the room was occupied, especially now that she had turned off the gas from the stove.

With her usual soft step she made her way towards the window; she was neither more nor less courageous than the ordinary woman, but she was impelled by curiosity. Who could be coming and why?

The answer came in a form quite unexpected; she saw a dark shadow close to the window and heard someone

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gently shake the sash. Then the truth flashed upon her; someone was trying to break into the house!

In dumb fear she watched the burglar. She saw him raise the lower half of the frame and cautiously step into the kitchen. She shrank involuntarily into a corner while the man turned the slide of his dark lantern and peered cautiously about him.

He wore a cap pulled down over his forehead and a wrap about his throat and the lower part of his face, so that it would have been almost impossible to see his features in the light, but in the obscurity this attempt at disguise was superfluous.

What was she to do? If she cried aloud for help the man would probably kill her, yet she could scarcely allow him to work his will without making an effort to save the property.

Her doubts were solved for her by the man himself, for at that moment he turned the light of his lantern full upon her and, with an exclamation of mingled surprise, fear and annoyance, grasped her by the throat.

"Don't breathe a word!" he said savagely.

This admonition was unnecessary, as the nurse was not able to speak with that strong hand gripping her throat.

"I want the jewels," continued the burglar in a fierce whisper.

"All right!" he continued in a kind of angry aside and in answer to a voice which made itself heard from without.

"You know where they are?" he said, again addressing the frightened woman and in a tone which implied that she did know.

"I think so," answered the woman.

The man had somewhat relaxed his grip in order to let her speak.

"Why are you fooling about in there?" came from the man outside. "Hurry up, will you!"

"They are kept in the lady's room, aren't they?"

"Yes."

"Then you get them," commanded the burglar. "Wait a bit, I'm coming with you to the door so that you don't play any tricks. And if you raise your voice. I'll——I know the plan of this house well enough, so I can tell if you attempt to lead me astray."

She thought of resisting, but of what avail would it be against this man? And if she led him to the door of the sick room and took advantage of her liberty when in the room in order to raise the alarm, the shock to her patient in her present condition would in all probability be fatal.

In drawing away his hand to allow her to precede him, the man caught his finger in a thin gold chain which the nurse invariably wore round her neck and broke it. Something fell to the ground with a metallic jingle.

"Give that to me!" cried the woman as the burglar stooped to pick up the object. "It is of no value in itself; it is mine and not worth taking. I value it because it is——"

The man pushed her aside with one hand while he placed his lantern on the floor, picked up the object and the lantern with one and the same hand, and then told the nurse to go forward.

"Give it to me!" she cried again, but without attempting to make any effort to recover her treasure.

Seeing that she remained passive, the man passed the object into his free hand and gazed at it. He saw a medallion, the picture of a very pretty child; the eyes seemed to look up into his with sweet trustfulness and he stared at the innocent face in wonderment.

"Who is this?" he asked at length. "Whose child is this?"

His voice had changed somewhat and become gentler. She noticed it and breathed more freely; she knew that a child's innocence had many times effected a mora change in a bad man, and she was hoping that this unexpected incident would be the means of saving her patient from robbery and herself from injury or the performance of a repugnant task.

"That is the portrait of my daughter when she was a child. It is Dora's portrait," she replied. "You will give it back to me now, won't you?"

"Your's!"

The man turned the light of the lantern directly upon her face and she felt as though his eyes were searching her through and through.

"Your's!"

He continued to gaze at her searchingly for a few seconds longer; then he placed the lantern on a table with a deep drawn sigh and handed the medallion to her.

"Yes. I recognise you now, Mary," he continued almost wearily. "Time and a change of dress, and the fact that I never expected to meet you again—especially in this house and in such circumstances, prevented me from recognising you at first. Just as you do not know me. And that is our daughter! Where is she?"

Our daughter! This was the husband who had left her many years before, left her to struggle on alone and earn a livehood for herself and the little one, and bring up the child in a way that would make a good woman of her. He had been a weak man and had been led astray by stronger minded "friends" who had fleeced him at the gaming table and induced him to speculate in bogus concerns established by themselves.

He had kept it from her until he could do so no longer—until the day before the crash came; and when, in her grief and anxiety for the welfare of Dora, she had given way to her feelings and had reproached him for his doings, he had left her and she had never seen him since. And now they met again in the old house, and he in a capacity that proved he had gone from bad to worse.

She did not reel or swoon, she felt no trace of weakness at this unexpected meeting and discovery; on the contrary, she stood before him more firmly and more erect than ever. Outside, the man who was waiting and keeping watch, uttered some hoarse menaces mingled with oaths; he could not understand his companion's conduct.

"Why don't you go on, you idiot?" he cried in a low tone. And this question was followed by others couched in less polite terms, all of which were unheeded by the two people in the kitchen.

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"How it all comes back!" said the burglar musingly, as he looked round the kitchen. "Do you remember that night, Mary, when we came home late and cooked an omelette? It was over there that you cut your thumb. And the happy time we had just before that—when we spent a month in Switzerland! Dora must be a woman by this time; where is she?"

His voice was changed, his whole manner was different; the coarse tone and bearing of the housebreaker were gone and there was a return to the gentleman of former days.

"She is at a boarding school, finishing her education; she gained a scholarship."

The words came from her in a clear, firm tone, a tone that was almost hard.

The man shrank from her; he realised the gulf which he had placed between them.

He remembered his own weakness and guilty career since he had so basely deserted her, and he was able to conceive the strength and purity of the woman who stood so erect before him.

He could imagine dimly the effort that must have been required for Mary, brought up as a lady, to earn a living for herself and her child—to undertake the work which should have fallen upon him. How could he expect her to be otherwise than hard.

"Are you going now?" Mary asked him calmly. "Or do you intend to continue your iniquitous work? If so spare me the horror of assisting you. But I warn you that if you enter the bedroom, you will be responsible for the death of a human being. Do not add that to your other crimes."

He hesitated and then answered her almost pleadingly.

"I will go now, Mary. But before I go I want you to grant one request. I want you to think a little more kindly of me in the future and to teach Dora to do the same. Tell her that I am dead—anything, so that she does not hate me. Perhaps one day I may see her, and may be more worthy to see her. And if that time should ever come, I should like to feel that she did not loathe me. Will you promise that?"

"She believes that you are dead. I have never told her anything that would lead her to suspect the truth. She has your portrait and in her innocence she loves you. But I trust from the bottom of my heart that you will never meet, for then her image will be cast down and broken."

"Good-bye, Mary!"

The man's head fell upon his chest: he picked up his lantern and made his way out through the window, which he shut quietly after him. Mary went to the other end of the kitchen for the drink which she had prepared and hurried upstairs to her patient.

"You have been gone such a time!" murmured the patient querulously.

"I am sorry, madam," returned the nurse, "but the delay was unavoidable."

Outside the house an altercation had taken place and the two men moved off quarrelling fiercely. In the morning, a man was found lying dead, stabbed to the heart, about half a mile away. Nurse Mary, who read a description of the murdered man in the newspaper, knew who that man was and shed a few bitter tears over a wasted life.

GEORGE KNIGHT.

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1. C*D*U*Y* *O*O*	4. M*L*I*'S F**D
2. S*N*I*H* S*A*	5. C**M**S M*S*A*D
3. E*W*R*S' H*R*E*E	6. E*O* F*U*T S*L*

Fill in the stars (one letter for each star) to represent six well advertised articles. Write those you find out on a sheet of paper, placing the respective number to each, and post it, together with your order for a double packet of LEMONELLE, a d P.O. or stamps for 1/3, enclosing a stamped addressed reply envelope for result, &c., to Miss EDITH CROSSLEY, 28 CITY ROAD, LONDON, E.C. *The Prizes will be awarded in order of correctness, and in case of equality will be added together and divided.*

NO PRIZE WILL BE AWARDED UNDER £2.

Should more than forty competitors send in correct solutions, a further six advertised articles will be given in order to decide the prizes. The Competition will close on SATURDAY, JUNE 30TH. Prize particulars, &c., will be sent to all Competitors on Monday, July 2nd. The LEMONELLE will be despatched to purchasers per return of post, together with a notice informing Competitors how many of their solutions are correct.

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WANTED—A COOK.

When Kitty told us that the baker would wait no longer, and that this time she really must go, there was great grief amongst us. She had been with us for years. She loved us all, knew all our tastes, our secrets, and our tempers.

The baker had been patient, and now that his new shop was all ready, and the business paid for, the tidy room behind well stocked with horsehair suite, oleographs, a duchesse pair, plenty of pampas grass, and other luxuries, we had not the heart to persuade Kitty to remain longer with us.

The children said the new cook must be able to swing high, make toffy, and cut out boy doll's trousers.

My sister wished, if possible, to avoid advertising, so she went, I with her, to a registry office.

We found plenty of waiting mistresses. Of domestics there was a dearth. Cooks were at a premium, "generals" almost an unknown quantity, and housemaids rare.

At last we were told we might speak to Maud Smith. We rose, and followed by the envious glances of those around us, went into another room. Maud Smith was fine-looking. We bowed respectfully to her; she somewhat haughtily returned our salute.

"What wages do you give?" she began.

"Fourteen shillings a week," said my sister, "and no washing."

"Oh, I would not go where there was washing," said Maud. "How many children?"

"Five," said my sister guiltily.

"Well, I don't like going where there is a lot of children. I don't mind a couple."

In an undertone I offered to drown three of Mary's treasures for a consideration, while Maud continued:

"How many nights a week out?"

"One, and every second Sunday."

"I don't mind trying it; but I must always get Monday evenings off to attend a local society I belong to, whatever happens."

It dawned on us that we had asked this damsel none of the questions we had come armed with.

"But can you cook?" Mary said.

"Oh, yes," was the reply; "I can cook everything."

"Have you any references to that effect?" said my sister bravely. "I should like to see some."

"Well," said Maud Smith in a really offended tone, "I am not used to being asked for references. I would not demean myself by asking for any. All my mistresses cry when I leave them, and there are two now wanting me back, if I just hold up my little finger."

"Surely there is someone I could ask about you, just for form's sake," said Mary.

"Oh, there is plenty if I cared to name them. I'll think it over, and give you an answer to-morrow. I fancy your place is a bit too far out to please me."

We found ourselves dismissed. The registry office manageress seemed annoyed when we told her something of the interview. "She has a queer temper," she said, "and won't stand being interfered with, but she is a good cook, and it is a pity you bothered about references; they don't like it."

We saw a few others. One old Irish lady was very anxious to come to us. "You are both so ladylike, my dears," she said.

She wasn't a cook at all, but a charwoman. She said she would like a change after fifteen years of charring, and fancied she would have a nice comfortable home with us.

"You could come and teach me iverything lovely," she said to me. "I'd niver object to havin' you in my kitchen as them professionals cooks would."

We called at another office. The manageress said she had just the person to suit us, and showing us into a room, we found in front of us——

Maud Smith! Now she would have none of us. We went through the performance of interviewing two or three domestics.

None were suitable. One said she could cook beautifully—little dishes, entrées, savouries, everything, in fact. When we began to specify these she became somewhat confused. How did she cook a curry? Well, some people liked it one way, some another. She was not very particular. Savouries she took to be our bad pronunciation of saveloys, and said you got them best from the man with the hand cart in the street. When asked if she could make Welsh rarebit, she smiled serenely, and said:

"Oh, yes, and hare, too, grand."

Another registry office. No one was there except the usual array of domesticless mistresses. There was a good name on the books, we were told; one that would really suit—Maud Smith.

We went home and advertised. We had a great many applicants. Dressmakers came and washerwomen. One lady nurse tried hard to persuade us to take her, saying she would be so useful in a case of emergency. One poor mad lady said she would tell us candidly she had been in a lunatic asylum for a short time. She was gentle and tired, and said if we saw her getting at all "queer" we could ring up the police. When we rejected her offer she cried, and said her last hope was gone, and what did we propose doing for her.

At last we engaged one. Her references were good, but all lacked something. None reported her to be "sober." Was the omission intentional? we wondered. By this time we knew our places better than to make too many inquiries; we decided that we must just trust to luck and a good key to the cellar. She was to have come last night. Her name was Gertrude. She objected to being called "cook" emphatically. She also objected to wearing caps. She evidently objected to us finally, for although Mary and I sat up for her until past twelve o'clock, she never came. All her mistresses, according to her accounts, seem to have been possessed of very intemperate habits, and forgot things, and had to be put to bed in an incapable state by Gertrude; possibly some of these habits had been infectious.

Mary is opposite to me now, nearly weeping.

"What shall I do, Winifred?" she says, "Shall I take Violet Roseworthy, and let her have 'her boy' in the kitchen on his nights out, and teach her everything, or I shall write and implore Maud Smith to honour us."

This from my haughty sister, who a few days back was a strict disciplinarian, rigid in her rules, and particular to a degree.

"Poison the baker," I say.

Esther.

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The New Hair Grower, "TATCHO," was discovered by Mr. Geo. R. Sims ("Dagonet" of the "Referee") in 1879.

Now Mr. G. R. Sims, as many people know, is one of the busiest men in the Kingdom, but, when eager for an explanation, a *Daily Mail* representative sought out Mr. Sims and asked him if it were true that he had forsaken the leafy paths of light literature for the concrete road of commerce, Mr. Sims, hastily affixing his signature to a letter, looked up and extended a characteristically cordial welcome. Then he said: "In '80 I found that I was rapidly going bald. Not seriously, you understand, but the thinning out was sufficiently marked to set me thinking out a remedy. I went to two specialists, both of whom cheerfully assured me that I should be absolutely bald in two years.

"Then I discovered the preparation which has now been placed upon the market. That is to say, I was told something, and by careful trials and experiments I found that I had hit upon a remedy capable of working wonders. Look at my hair now. Look at the colour; isn't that convincing evidence of the value of my preparation?"

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CARE OF THE SKIN.

We wish to urge on all readers of this paper the extreme importance of having a healthy skin. If the pores are clogged, whether by the neglect of the ordinary rules of health, or by some skin disease, ill-health is sure to result. Apart from the unsightly appearance of an ever-present rash, the intolerable itching causes broken rest, and a variety of unpleasant symptoms.

ECZEMA.

The chief Skin Trouble to which the skin is liable is known as Eczema, which is merely a light-sounding name for a cold or catarrh affecting the skin. If Eczema is acute the part affected is red and hot, and burns and weeps. If it is a chronic variety, the surface is dry, often scaly, and there is great skin irritation.

Mr. Geo. C. Fellowes Simmons, of R.N.T. College, Devonport, writes: "The cure affected by your 'Antexema' was such that it has given me perfect faith in your remedy, and I am now taking your Blood Granules, which I only hope and believe will cure me internally as your 'Antexema' has cured the external eruption."

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Mrs. E. Cuffin, of 10 Grove Street, Bedford Street, Leicester, writes: "I thank God and you for the relief I have got from your 'Antexema.' For two years I have suffered great pain in my legs. About two months ago they began to be rough and inflamed. Seeing your advt., I sent for a free sample, which I received from you the following day. By the time I had used the sample bottle of 'Antexema' my legs were healed."

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Eczema affecting children is frequently caused by the use of strong soaps, and by wearing underclothing from which the soap or soda has been imperfectly removed. Fevers, teething, and a diet containing too much sugar are also said to be frequent causes.

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ECZEMA OF THE HANDS.

With a little care it is not difficult to have nice hands. Do not wet them more than is absolutely necessary, and do not use strong acrid soaps. People who use their hands freely, as in nearly every trade, and especially those engaged in laundry work, always suffer more or less from hand troubles. "Antexema" is an excellent remedy for any form of eczema caused by the action of irritants, and it is an equally necessary household requisite to keep the skin in good condition, when red, rough, and dirty-looking.

Mrs. A. Chapman, of Riby, near Stallingboro', Lincs., writes: "'Antexema' is a wonderful specific for eczema. I had it in my hands, and after using a bottle of your 'Antexema' it disappeared."

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Should you wish to test "Antexema," all that is necessary is to write to the Antexema Co., 83 Castle Road, London, N.W., naming this paper, and enclosing one stamp to defray postage, and receive a Free Trial Sample, together with a valuable booklet on the Skin, by return of post.

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"Antexema" is sold in bottles by Chemists and Stores at 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d., or post free for 1s. 3d. and 2s. 9d. from the Antexema Company, 83 Castle Road, London, N.W.

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THE BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

This week we present a new form of competition to our readers. In this competition a prize of £2 will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

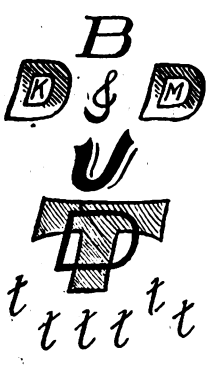
Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, Short Stories, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by first post on Monday, July 2nd, 1900.

EACH OF THE FOLLOWING REPRESENTS A SENTENCE.

What are they?

No. 148.

No. 149.



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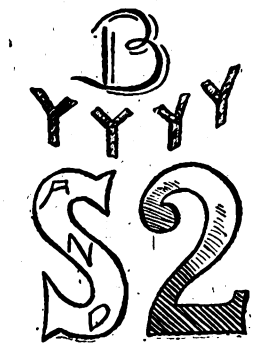

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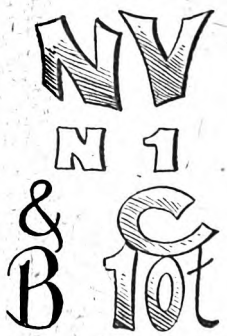

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Nos. 124 to 129.

The prize of £2 has been awarded to Mrs. Wildmore, 2 Albert Street, Worksop, whose solution was the first correct one dealt with.

A copy of "The Incidental Bishop," by Grant Allen, has been sent to:

Mrs. J. J. Hogg, Manila House, 167 Kensington Avenue, East Ham.
Dr. A. Spearing, Patricroft, Lancs.
F. J. Buckley, 9 Grove Terrace, Grove Lane, Handsworth, Staffs.
R. D. Watt, Knocklandside, Kilmaurs, N.B.
A. Watkinson, Factory Lane, Doncaster.
T. H. Wright, 59 William Edward Street, Birmingham.
W. Robertson, 7A North Woodside Road, Glasgow.
Miss L. Saunders, 149 Tulse Hill, S.W.
Charles Vernon, Gwenholm, Castle Road, North Finchley.
Miss L. Wilkinson, Parkside, Greenbank, Plymouth.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES.

Nos. 130 to 135.

No. 130. **CHELMSFORD.**

No. 131. **Rats live underground.**

No. 132. **Two heads are better than one.**

No. 133.

H E A R
E A S E
A S P S
R E S T

No. 134. **PATIENCE.**

No. 135. **CLUB-LAW.**

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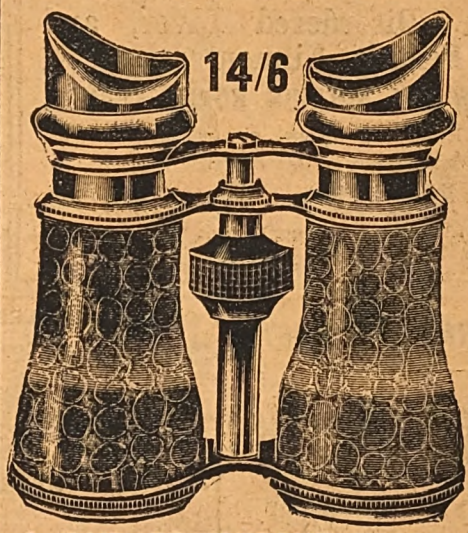

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THE OTHER HALF OF THE SCISSORS.

"SO you're going out to get tied up, lassie—d'ye know, I though you were just that kind of girl!"

Grahame Leicester was by nature an honest man, and by education a gentleman; therefore, with no small sense of shame he looked into the eyes of the girl he was addressing and told a direct—yes, a deliberate lie.

Fourteen days on an ocean liner with Violet Hawthorn had taught him many things. One was that it mattered not whether the sea and sky alike were turquoise, and sun and wind chased each other under the awning of the quarter deck, making one glad to be alive—or whether a lowering sky drove up in thick banks of cloud lashing the cold grey sea into a fury—each phase was as one, so that he might see one thing—a wiry little black-eyed, black-haired figure in blue pilot coat and skirt, with a Tam o' Shanter set jauntily on her almost raven locks, and a merry dimple chasing a pout or a look of unutterable scorn across her face.

It was not that of a goddess or of a saint—but it seemed to Grahame Leicester that he, at least, had seen traces of either there, in that little brown, mobile face. He had perhaps been afforded greater opportunity than most of judging, for she had evinced a preference for his society because, as she told him with delightful candour, that he "was English—and not a bounder."

She looked up at him now as he spoke, her already more than *retroussé* nose seeming to tilt still higher as she threw him a look, half-inquiring, half-scornful, from her bright eyes.

Then, as if altering their purpose, the scorn died out, and into their soft clear depths crept one of pity.

And Grahame Leicester knew she had seen the little fib that he had jerked out to cover his surprise. But he did not know that the pity that shone from those unexplored depths came—not at the thought of the slight deviation from the truth—but at the thought of the need of it. She knew that old old code of an English gentleman so fast dying out—*noblesse oblige*, made the little subterfuge rather a point of honour than a lie to Grahame Leicester.

True it was only that morning it had been brought home to her by something which she had overheard, that she was more than an ordinary fellow passenger in the eyes of her chosen chum. He fidgetted uneasily on the saloon cushions as he twirled his well-worn felt hat, and watched the queer anomaly that faced him making up her diary.

"Sticking me in it for all I know—making me out the fool I am," he muttered to himself.

The object of his thoughts scribbled on, a queer little smile of inscrutability puckering up the corners of her mouth.

Then, at last, exasperated by her seeming indifference he spoke:

"Say, lassie, d'ye think that when you've finished your quill-driving you'll be fit for a game of deck billiards—things are awfully slow up there. Hurry up, or someone'll have jumped our claim."

Violet Hawthorn was meditatively sucking the end of her penholder—a relic of the days when she was a young Barbarian, jumping five-barred gates and punting headlong into muddy ditches with her brothers.

"Yes! Perhaps—but don't bother and—do you think it would be possible for you to talk in real 'Pukka' English—just for one day, say? I'm demoralised already—just listen to the rubbish I've been entering in my diary—Phil said in his letter—Mr. Leicester, that is the man we call the 'Bushranger' (that's you) has 'jumped our claim' now, did you ever hear such nonsense—and only yesterday it was 'Mr. Leicester says I'm to come along on deck and bring my swag' it's awful, and I tell you when they read it, it will turn the mater's hair grey, and all because you will bother and use bush slang."

She ended with an injured little pout, and a face of solemn mock-earnestness.

"Hang it! Why don't you tell a fellow straight, when you don't want him—to go." And the 'Bushranger' rose and fled in more haste than the occasion warranted—but not on deck. He presently found him-

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self in his cabin at the farther end of the main deck corridor.

He dropped on to a huge overland trunk that he had succeeded, by means of sundry tips, in getting into his cabin; and his head fell into his hands. He was 'sorting himself out a bit,' as he called it.

It was not often he indulged in real hard thinking; except when a long spell up country found him at his hut door on some quiet heat-laden night, when the very air seemed to be used up, with only a pipe, and a Dingo howling some twenty yards away for company.

When amongst his kind, he was generally occupied in studying them, for the mere novelty of the thing.

He had been indulging in this, his favourite pastime, for the past two weeks, having ample opportunity as a second saloon passenger of the *Ogowe*, bound from Tilbury Dock to Sydney.

But to-day it had been brought home to him that he had ceased to generalise—and that the human freight of the *Ogowe* came out as tallied by Violet Hawthorn.

"Great Scott!" he muttered to himself, beads of perspiration standing out upon his forehead, "she's lashing into us pretty freely in that diary of hers. It'll be straight work all of it though—not often you meet with a girl who can be straight nowadays—doesn't seem to be included in their education, real Pukka straight as she calls it—she got that addition to her vocabulary from Kipling, I suppose. Well, Grahame, my boy, you're a fool; it's another one of your silly castles in the air that are always falling to bits—go and play the man!"

This form of reasoning was what Grahame Leicester called his sitting down philosophy, or, as he quaintly put it, "I just say to myself, sit down."

He frequently recommended that means of self-repression, having found the need for it in long long hours of introspection, fighting temptations that only those who have faced the utter desolateness of life in an Australian back block can understand.

He pulled himself up with an effort, only the faint quiver round the lips, and the distension of the proud well-bred nostrils showing how tough had been the fight.

Grahame Leicester had been home on a six months' holiday, which, after ten years of his desolate life, he felt he had deserved.

There had been, in the innermost recesses of his "attic," a back thought, and that was, that perchance amongst his old chums of his boyhood's days there might be found one girl who would not deem it too great a sacrifice to share his desolate life with him. But time had not stood still in the old homeland, and he found hoydens turned into hunting wives of sporting squires—plain, correct girls turned into grave-faced matrons and mothers, and shy, clinging little lassies figuring in the society columns of the ladies' weeklies.

Again he brought his philosophy to bear upon the point, but with bitter insistency the thought haunted him that no one wanted him. There was apparently no use for him—no place—why had he come?

Perhaps he was a little bit too proud to see the fine, very fine mental distinction they had made between the handsome, fresh-faced lad who, twelve years ago had been up for Sandhurst—and the bronzed, thick-set man of thirty who had come among them, with a touch of baldness where the most fascinating wavy locks had once flourished, and a moustache as wiry apparently as himself

They did not understand him—the man of the quiet moods; and so he had turned back again—and alone; to his birds and beasts who knew him—to his mother nature who had nurtured him so long.

Then Fate played him, as it seemed, another trick, and threw across his path this child-woman—this elf, with her school-girl face and her Mother-heart that seemed to have room for all. To-day he had learned from her own lips that there was, as she framed it, "a fire-proof compartment," where she kept that one who was so very rich that he could afford that she should scatter the crumbs he had left of her heart's love, on those around her.

She had given him excellent advice too, on the subject of natural selection in a quaint, grandmotherly fashion that at once sat oddly, and yet seemed to fit certain moods in her to perfection.

Phil Armstrong and she had been playmates, and it was owing to her that he had used his influence and been put on the Australian Station where, as First-Lieutenant of H.M.S. *Waratah*, he now awaited her arrival.

"It's three years since I saw him; but you know nothing matters—nothing so long as you are quite sure that you're the other half of the scissors."

And the man, grown cynical, out of the depth of his experience, marvelled at the faith that is still left to some women.

"Funny thing how she mixed that sentence up in her diary too," and he repeated her words, lingering almost affectionately on them.

"What irony it looks taken literally, 'Mr. Leicester, that is, the man we call the Bushranger has jumped our claim'—fortunately I don't think she saw it. Egad, a chance would be a fine thing if there were any—but, even if there were, it's one of the things a fellow can't do. Heigho! She'll be waiting now I suppose."

He swung along the alley-way and up the companion to find the object of his thoughts swinging her white, canvas-clad feet from the height of the wooden bar that held the supports of the after-bridge.

As usual a small coterie had gathered round Miss Hawthorn, each eager to get in a word as she emphatically delivered judgment on a variety of subjects; which concerned chiefly the choice of a team for the ladies' tug-o-war, the superior claims of a dance on deck to a variety concert below, and all the usual topics of life on shipboard.

She threw him a fearless friendly smile of welcome over the heads of the little crowd, a smile that puzzled, not a little, those who had begun to take an interest in the couple. She did not notice their apparent making way instinctively for him, but Grahame Leicester did, fresh from the sting of the wound, which, reason as he might, he could not deny had been a blow to him that morning.

"I'm promised to Mr. Leicester for a game of billiards now," she said, slipping down without the proffered help of several hands. "Come along, I'm ready."

"Swish, swish," went the wooden circles along the deck as the long cues drew back with a clatter.

"What bad play, Mr. Leicester. Don't send them back to England; it's quite hot enough without the extra exertion of raking them in. Do you know, you haven't scored one yet?"

He did know, and took the scorn in her voice meekly. He would atone in the last round, and there was a sort of grim satisfaction in arousing her out of her indifferent attitude. The mobile mouth had begun to droop, and the forehead to pucker ominously; they

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always won when they played together, and this morning he was scoring so very badly. What could be the matter?

The game ended and the score was called: "Game to plain, seven white." And she had made the seven with a heavy roll on too; it was so exasperating.

They exchanged sides, Violet pausing to murmur as she passed her partner, in tones that were meant to be cutting:

"You might have said so, if you felt sea-sick, and not played so disgracefully. I hate being beaten!"

The scathing allusion to *mal-de-mer*, from which he never by the faintest chance suffered, rankled a little, but the grim satisfaction that he took in having roused her made up abundantly.

The midday dinner-bell came as a welcome interruption to a game that two of the players, at least, were in no mood for—but it was only one of many that began badly and ended well, and *vice versa*, before the end of the *Ogowe's* voyage, as the days flew on into weeks, all too slow for some, all too fast for others.

She was but two days out from Melbourne on a cold, wet early Spring morning, and the burning heat of Adelaide had left everyone too weak to stand the change.

Violet Hawthorn chafed at the vagaries of this 'Sunny South' as she had learned to ironically term it; and tucked up in a quiet corner, her feet enveloped in a rug, she gave herself up to reflection. She had learnt to realise her ignorance of many things, and many new phases of life in the past three weeks.

As usual a small coterie had gathered round Miss Hawthorn.

Hitherto, her life pictures she had drawn at her will. They had come without an effort, just the one central figure—the object round which all other figures on the canvas had grouped themselves in relative proportions. This morning it was all a muddle she told herself, and wouldn't come right.

She muttered something that seemed to the man in the chair by her side to have reference to the weather.

"What's the matter with the weather now, lassie?" he asked. "Anything you want? Aren't you comfy yet? Only say the word and I'll get it."

He had always called her Lassie—never from the first day of their meeting could she remember he had called her by any other name.

From anyone else she would hotly have resented it, but it was not the same with Grahame Leicester somehow—it had never seemed a familiarity from him. It was just a distinction that was characteristic of him, and of their friendship.

She answered him without taking her eyes from the thin grey line of hills in the distance.

"Oh, nothing thanks—I'm a bit mixed, that's all. Picture out in the perspective—always was my weak point; thought I'd outgrown it, that's all—with other weaknesses."

He knew her better than to ask for any further explanation. He had never dared to hope that he was assigned a place in the background of her life, much less that at that very moment he was the figure that had upset the perspective of the middle distance foreground.

True, it had flashed on him with a new light that he had as quickly stifled with his pet philosophy, that when they had at last said "good-night" in the corridor she had held out her hand, a formality so rarely observed on shipboard as to be noted, especially by Grahame Leicester, for it was the first time their hands had met. He had put it down to a warm-hearted wish on her part to show him that she understood; as indeed she seemed

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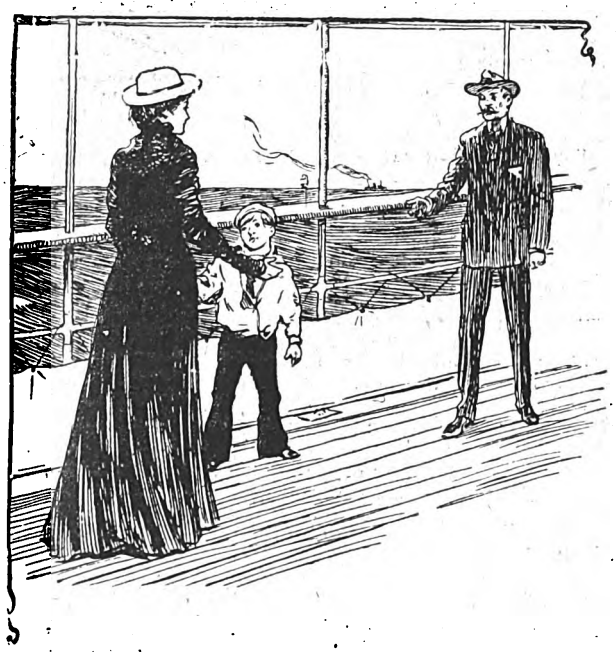
to do all he had been talking to her about, as they paced the lower when driven from the soaking upper deck, and had been the last to leave.

She had been wondrously good to him those last two days he thought with a bitter-sweet little smile, but being a philosopher he meant to make the most of the crumbs. Last night—his last—she had seemed to be a summary of all her moods in one. She had begun by chaffing him, saying that they would all have need of extra handkerchiefs on the morrow to weep for him. She had listened, all soft sympathy, to his oft-repeated tale of the lonely life he must return to, and been all attention as he told of each habit of each of his four-footed and winged friends in the bush. He had told her so much that he had even opened up to her the one sealed chamber of his heart—the one in which Grahame Leicester kept his mother—and there were few women whom he considered worthy of that honour. She had even seemed to understand when he told her that he had "run amok" in his regimental exams. at Sandhurst, and he had got sick of trying to "Aldershot it," and had "come away here." All she seemed to understand, and there was no need to explain that it was not because he was a coward that he did not wear the Queen's uniform; but because a mistaken Government thought it necessary that a man should rightly construe a given number of Latin verbs to fit him to fight a lot of savages with no language in particular.

He wondered with a sort of half-savage jealousy what happy reverie she was lost in now. Almost in his heart he hated this Philip Armstrong—this strong man who was to have no more days of loneliness, whilst he ate out his heart in solitary seclusion from his kind.

"Lucky devil!" he murmured, "to have a girl to come twelve thousand miles to marry him, and I've been that to find one—and here I am."

His reverie was interrupted by a voice saying in measured tones:



He held out her hand with the old bright smile he knew so well.

"The purser tells me we shall not be in till to-morrow, Mr. Leicester, so you will have one more evening."

The calm, measured tones betrayed nothing of the mental struggle that for one tense moment of thought had upset the perspective; and the ringing laugh that ended her meditation of the next few minutes told the man in the chair by her side, if he had need to be reminded, how far he already was in the dim, faint distance of her life's horizon.

He winced slightly as from a wound as he turned to her.

"You might give a fellow a chance to share at least your jokes with you."

She was looking at him now, with eyes running over with laughter.

"Yes, it was a joke—such a joke too—but, I can't help it if you are hurt—it's one of those in which present company are always excepted."

For a moment the sensitive nostrils were extended—then a philosophical smile crept over his face, and perhaps for the fiftieth time that voyage, Grahame Leicester said to himself "sit down."

He had ample need to say it too, some thirty-six hours later, when, in a drizzle of rain and the air heavy with heat, the *Ogowe*'s visitors were ordered off at the Port Melbourne Wharf.

She had been in port barely a day, being behind time, and Grahame Leicester, who had gone off in the morning with his baggage, had returned to afternoon tea with his party, that is the party which ebbed and flowed around Violet Hawthorn.

He had made it his boast, that, since the day when a small lad of seven he had been shipped in charge of the captain of a channel boat, across to school in Dinant, that he had never known what home-sickness was. But to-night, with the handshakings going on around him, he sat as one dazed. He had for the time lost his bearings.

Without meaning to do so, he had for a time made this ship his home, or something had, something indefinable, and now it seemed to him as if there were no room for him in the scheme of life at all.

His mood affected the party in turn, until each ceased to make jokes at the other's expense to keep the ball rolling.

They were roused to a sense of reality by a breezy voice which came from a cabin mate of Leicester's, surrounded by a merry group of girl cousins who were about to carry him off.

"I say, Leicester, old man, do you know the bell's rung? Do you want to go on with the pilot? Hurry up."

"Don't care a hang if I do. Shouldn't mind if I went on to Sydney," retorted Leicester, snappishly.

But he rose and mechanically began to light his pipe as he dragged wearily up the stairs to the companion-way.

Once there, he was soon the centre of a group, all eager to shake his hand.

"Down with the gangway—all on shore," rang out on the heat-laden air. And the last hand dropped, noting an unsteadiness in the voice that it was so hard to associate with anything but fun and laughter.

An unspoken question seemed to be in all minds save his, for the blue eyes asked no questions, he knew she would come, and last, as she did. His eyes, dumb with pain as a sick collie, thanked her mutely; there was one wring of a little brown hand that he had touched only once before, and the gangway fell.

It was only Violet Hawthorn, who saw the thin, white

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line round the mouth and quivering nostrils, as he stood the last on the end of the quay, his hat raised, his pipe in his mouth held, as he had made many a horse chew the bit, hard.

And the *Ogowe*, with her human freight of nine hundred odd on board, glided slowly out into the deep, amid the clanking of chains, the faint cheers of a few and the still fainter sighs of many who had yet to learn what the breaking up of a happy shipboard party can mean.

So Grahame Leicester turned to face his life once more. He relaxed the tight tension of his lips, as he turned just in time to catch the bowl of his pipe, for the amber stem was broken.

* * * * *

A small boy with a face of that unusual intelligence that one is accustomed to associate with the young Australian, sat on the rail of a huge mail-boat that lay alongside the Port Melbourne Wharf.

The R. M. S. *Ogowe* was out once more on the long trail, the trail that is always new. It was a morning in early March—the time of year when the stream of homeward-bound travellers is at its height.

The object, the special object of the small boy's attention was a sun-burnt man, iron-grey, with the honest blue eye that ever appeals to the child mind. Having seen the whole of his baggage on board, he made his way along the main deck and up the companion to the one aft devoted to the use of the second saloon passengers, in blissful unconsciousness of the interest he was creating in one small mind.

Seeing his approach, the child loosened his hold of the stanchion to which he had been clinging, and slid down.

Taking the whole of his courage in both chubby hands, he marched fearlessly up to the tall stranger—pulling at his cap.

"I say—you don't mind, do you? but I fink I shall like you—you look what my muvver calls 'straight'—an' isn't it funny? my name's Grahame, too—what's your uvver name? I saw it on the twunks, but I couldn't say it pwoperly."

The tall man, with a suspicion of a stoop in the shoulders that betokened a long life in the saddle, bent down and took the two small hands that were clinging to his nether garments in his own brown ones.

He knew very little about youngsters, but he told himself that there was certainly something about this one that appealed to him.

He sat down upon a deck chair that stood near and drew the boy between his knees.

"My name's Leicester, old man, I don't think we've met before, you and I, though I suppose you're a bit of a canny Scot, too, eh?"

"Well, I fink I'se a 'Stralian, but my muvver says I'se a real Britisher, and I was named after a very old fwend of my muvver's, my weal name is Philip Gwahame Armstrong, only Phil was my daddy's name too, and vey called me by ve uvver so as not to get mixed."

A mist that was not of the sea blotted out the dancing white sea-horses that had been fixing themselves with fiendish persistency on the brain of Grahame Leicester, as he listened.

What trick was Fate about to play him now, he wondered. He looked down at the childish face that nearly touched his own, the face of *her* child, and realised as in a flash why it had seemed so familiar. Was it not the very counterpart of the one that had haunted him now these ten years, a ghost of his life that refused to be laid.

He held him from him at arm's length when the boy's face suddenly lighted up, and before he could draw him to him again, he had gone.

Turning his head to see the attraction, Grahame Leicester rose and followed him. A slight figure clad in the orthodox widow's garb, in all but the white cap, for which she had substituted a white sun hat, was being dragged towards him by her son. She held out her hand with the old, bright, fearless smile he knew so well, and with the air of a school-boy caught out of bounds he stood before her—the woman whom he had left ten years ago almost on that same spot—the little girl in the Tam o' Shanter and the pilot coat.

But Grahame Leicester had found some one who wanted him at last.

And here was a woman, her face lined with the marks that pain and a great sorrow must always leave, and a sadness in the eyes that had been so brimful of mischief.

And all that he said was like the man himself—simple and straight.

"How is it with you now, Lassie?"

For the life of him he could not call her by her name—that name which now as it seemed to him served but to remind them both of what each had lost.

Then, while they paced the deck that each knew so well, she told him how that four years ago her husband, Philip Armstrong, had been the first to succumb to the plague when the *Waratah* had been sent to protect the pearl fisheries and had put in at Samoa for coal; how too, she had struggled on in her lonely life for four years, and now was bringing home her boy to educate him at his father's old school.

Then came his turn, and he related how an unusual stroke of luck had fallen to his share, and he had sold his stock at famine prices, the drought having killed thousands in the country round, "and now," he ended, "I'm bringing all my 'swag' along with me, and mean to stay in the Old Country altogether."

So, day by day, he drew their two chairs to the old accustomed place, and listened still, as she talked of "her Philip," in a softer, gentler tone and with a smile, that in its origin, was often very near the fountain of tears.

They were sitting, as usual, one bright spring morning (this time an English spring, for they were but a day from Plymouth), he with a book, which an observant stranger might have noticed had not had a page turned for half-an-hour, she with some work that her usually

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deft fingers had been busy unpicking more than once. To the woman, it was strangely like that other morning—that Australian spring morning, ten years ago—when something had upset the perspective in her life's picture. This time it was not with a merry laugh that it was set straight, but a deep sigh ran with a tremor through her slight form, shaking it like an aspen leaf. Her work dropped from her hands, and she drew her deep forehead into a perplexed frown.

Her companion glanced up quickly.

"You're not cold, Lassie? You'll be feeling it a bit now after the sunny South, you know."

He reached out his hand to draw her rug more carefully round her, and again that tremor shook her frame.

"You're not ill, eh, Lassie?"

"Oh! no, no, only—Grahame, come here." The little fellow came to his mother's side and she took the child's hand, holding it tightly in both her own. It was as though her soul needed some sheet anchor, some link with that life, that try as she would seemed to be slipping out of her grasp.

Then she went on, "You remember the morning of the day before we reached Melbourne ten years ago?"

He nodded his assent.

"I told you then that perspective was my weak point, I believe it's weaker now, for then I got the picture right again, and now, now it's all out of focus altogether."

Grahame Leicester's sitting down philosophy had to be brought to bear before he answered her. Then, in level tones, he said:

"Why, what's wrong, Lassie? You, you're going back to your friends I hope?"

With the tact and sensitiveness of his type, he had never once alluded to her great loss. Perhaps there was a *soupçon* of another feeling that he was slower to own.

She looked up with something like a dry sob in the throat as she spoke:

"There are none to go to, my parents are dead, and they (the rest) do not want me and my boy—they are poor enough without that added burden, and besides, they would not understand that all my light had gone from my life, and would think me dull. I wonder—oh, I wonder, if any man ever knew how much a little comfort is to a woman—to what length a woman will go to be comforted."

With the quick, warm instinct of a child, the boy had climbed into her lap, and was in danger of strangling his "muvver" with his chubby arms.

For an instant the man let himself go, loosened his grip on the bearing rein, as he phrased it, but the child's action seemed to turn his thought aside, to be a barrier between them, and he quietly answered:

"Is there no one who can do it, Lassie?"

Now Violet Armstrong had learnt much in ten years, and she knew that the man who asked that question in those level tones would give his soul to be that one, but that he dared not wrong her sense of honour to the dead by telling her. She knew, too, that this man had filled such a gap in her life that would for ever after be void and empty but for one word.

So the woman took her life into her own hand and spoke that word—that one word.

"Yes," she said slowly, softly, and deliberately, "You."

There are no words to record what followed, but two hands were gripped in a vice of iron under the friendly cover of the rug, and Grahame minor who had climbed down to pick up his mother's work expressed his unqualified approval of "Lessie"—as he named his new friend—for a father.

That evening, as the long slanting rays of the sun that crept in at the port-hole chased each other along the corridor on the main deck, "Lessie" was to be seen carrying his newly-elected small son to his berth. They had been having rare fun and were running away from "muvver," who panted in the rear. Their cabins were not far apart and as they reached his own, Grahame Leicester stopped.

"Can you spare a moment, Lassie? I've got something to show you."

He reached up for an old tweed coat that hung by the side of his berth, and, pointing to the breast pocket on the left side, he said:

"That pocket's sacred to the memory of a pipe, Lassie; it's been there these ten years. Will you take it out?"

Wondering, she drew out a pipe with a broken amber stem that gleamed in the fading sunlight.

"Why, it's brookted?" exclaimed the boy. "Who did it?"

"Muvver" deliberately answered the man, "but she couldn't help it, so we'll forgive her. Eh! Grahame boy? It's done it's work, so we'll throw it away now."

And he hurled it out of the port as far as his strong arm could throw, and they watched it dance on the white sea horses.

Later that night he explained it all. It was so much easier by moonlight.

"You won't mind not being the other half of the scissors, Grahame?" she said very softly. "There's only one you know that fits really."

But Grahame Leicester had found someone who wanted him at last.

And he was content to comfort her, so that she would make no limit to the love he gave, for to some great souls truly it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Edna S. Gamble.

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The Last Night of the Drama.

THE taste of the theatre-going public at the present time is decidedly in favour of realism. I know that, because I am the manager of a small theatre in a provincial town. I tried to keep to the "legitimate," but the public wouldn't have it and I had to go in for the realistic just the same as others.

I have produced a good many pieces of that class and have done very well; but the most realistic piece of acting that was ever seen on the stage at my theatre was unrehearsed. At least, it was not rehearsed to the extent that it was carried through on the boards. That was a ghastly experience, and I hope it will never be repeated.

I didn't know the whole story at the time; it was unfolded to me nearly five years afterwards, but I know all about it now and can tell it to you.

I need not go into any details concerning the piece; it was a drama with plenty of sensation and pathos, and that's all that it is necessary for you to know. In the last act, and in the last scene but one, the villain is killed by a deformed girl whom he is persecuting; she stabs him with a dagger in a sudden fit of rage.

Now I must introduce you to the chief characters. The villain was a handsome fellow somewhere about thirty; his name was Geoffrey Walton. We had an idea that his private life had not been so good as it ought to have been, but we knew very little about that definitely, and his winning manner attracted us all.

Of course, he was after the heroine, who was Maude Sinclair in private and a tolerable actress in public. She was in the fortunate position of having two admirers, that is, both the hero of the piece and the villain. I will not say anything about the hero, because he doesn't figure in my story, and also because he is a well-known actor at this present time and to the best of my knowledge knows nothing of the inner history of the affair.

The deformed girl was called Jenny Sinclair, but that was not her real name. She was a Malay girl, as a matter of fact, and had been brought to England by Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair when quite a child; she had grown up in their family in a somewhat anomalous position—half servant, half daughter. It was said that the child's father had lost his life in saving that of Mr. Sinclair.

After the death of her parents, Maude took to the stage and the two girls lived together more like sisters than ever. Then Maude asked me to engage the other to take odd parts, such as a servant maid, and I engaged her.

In the piece to which I am referring she was taking a part that was rather more natural to her; in fact, I may as well own it, the drama had been written by myself and I had created for Jenny a part that was very much like her real life. A man who has to write plays must take advantage of all the incidents of life that come within his ken.

Jenny joined our company just about the same time as Walton, and I quickly saw they did not take kindly to each other, although I did not know the reason for this. I did not pay much attention to the fact, because the two were not likely to come into very close contact; but when I was writing that piece I remembered it and I thought it would assist each of them to play the respective parts more naturally. You see, it is a help to an actor when he has something to make him throw himself into the part, as it were; I have heard of a man actually making his wife jealous so that she could play the part of the jealous wife more realistically.

The cause of the dislike was made clear to me later on. Walton was the kind of man who would manage to captivate any woman who could not claim to be more than usually strong-minded, and Maude Sinclair was rather a pretty woman and not gifted with much mental far-sightedness. She soon fell under the spell of Walton, and the other suitor—the man I have mentioned as being a great actor at the present time, gave up a struggle in which he apparently had no chance.

Jenny, it appears, had in some way learnt something of the private career of Geoffrey Walton, and she feared that the upshot of the friendship or courtship of Walton and her foster-sister would be disastrous to the latter, as such friendship had already been to more than one woman whom Geoffrey Walton had captivated by his charm of manner.

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She was a Malay, as I have said, and very revengeful at heart, and the thought of the danger that threatened Maude brought all the savageness of her nature to the front. She watched and made certain in her own mind before she acted; and then she sought an interview with Geoffrey Walton.

The interview was short, but to the point. She told Geoffrey that he must desist in his attention to her sister, and Walton laughed at her and advised her to go back to her native country, as he did not brook any interference from savages who did not know what they were talking about. Jenny curbed her rage with difficulty, and left him with the threat that if he did not act upon her suggestion it would be the worse for him.

Feeling that she had failed in her endeavour to save her sister from danger, Jenny deliberated upon the advisability of putting the whole matter plainly before Maude, but she gave up the idea. She had no proofs, and she was convinced that Maude would not listen; in fact, Jenny had reluctantly to admit to herself that such a course would probably have the effect of estranging her sister and causing her to become more attached to Walton, whom she would look upon as having been maligned. So she allowed matters to drift, while still keeping on the look-out for a chance to upset Walton's plans, and becoming more and more determined to prevent a catastrophe at any cost.

One night when Maude reached home a few minutes later than Jenny, she saw the latter toying with a peculiar dagger which she used in the piece. It was a weapon brought from the East by Mr. Sinclair as a curiosity; Jenny had asked for it after the death of the old man, because there was just an idea that it had belonged to her father.

"Oh, put that dreadful thing away, Jenny!" said Maude with a little shudder. "I really tremble sometimes when I see you suddenly draw it from your waist in that scene where you kill Geoff—I mean the villain."

"It is harmless enough if you are careful," returned Jenny with a strange smile. "I know how to handle the weapon and it is not likely that I shall do myself any mischief with it."

"Never mind, dear," said Maude; "put it away. You may be careful, but it is much safer in the case."

Jenny did as she was requested, but on the following evening she was playing with the weapon again when Maude came along the passage, and she only managed to hide it in time to prevent her sister from catching a glimpse of it. Maude Sinclair generally arrived home later than Jenny now, for Walton accompanied her and sometimes they did not take the shortest route.

It was Thursday night and the last performance but one of my sensational drama had been given. Jenny Sinclair went straight home as was her wont, and once more sat lost in thought with the dagger in her hand. The cat, always a favourite with Jenny, finding that the girl paid no attention to her continued purring, gave a sudden spring into Jenny's lap. In doing so she came in contact with the point of the dagger.

With a cry of pain, the animal sprang to the ground and began licking the wounded part, but in a few seconds she rolled over dead.

Then Jenny knew that the dagger was poisonous! She hurriedly caught up the cat and took it to the back of the house where she tossed the body into an adjoining yard.

On the following evening the last performance of the drama took place and the house was simply packed. The whole thing went off splendidly until we reached the scene in which the villain is killed, and then there was a stage wait which made me cross.

Geoffrey Walton was erratic at times—I think he used to indulge occasionally in strong liquors, and once or twice had not been ready to enter when his cue was given, but the actors generally improvised a little talk to fill up the interval so that the wait was not noticed by the public.

This evening, however, it was decidedly awkward, for Walton was not to be found and Jenny was not enough of an actress to do the needful. So there was a little trouble, which had its usual effect upon my temper. Just as I was getting frantic, and the audience were becoming noisy, Walton appeared and Miss Sinclair with him.

I did not stop to inquire, mentally or publicly, where they had got to, but said something angrily to the belated villain which sent him on the stage with a flush on his cheeks and something on his lips that was not included in the book. Still, that sort of thing is very aggravating to a manager, you know.

The audience were quickly brought back to good humour by the appearance of Walton, and the act proceeded.

The villain tormented the girl in the usual fashion because she would not assist him in his nefarious plans, and I think that his acting was better than ever I had seen it. It is just possible that he played the part with more vehemence than was his wont owing to his being annoyed at what I had said, and sometimes I have gone so far as to wonder whether that hastened the climax. It may be that Jenny's ideas were confirmed or intensified by the angry and—well, wicked—look in his eyes. But I haven't the least doubt that it would have come about sooner or later in any case.

The audience was strung up with excitement as the dialogue continued; presently there was a scuffle between the two characters, and I, who was watching at the side, fancied that there was some talk in an undertone between them which was not in the part. Then came the finale, when the persecuted girl, enraged beyond all bounds, drew the Malay dagger and stabbed the villain.

Down went Walton in grand style, while the girl crouched fearfully in a corner with her eyes fixed on the prostrate form; the audience applauded mightily as a front scene was pushed on and shut Walton and Jenny from view. On many occasions during the run it had

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been necessary to respond to the call, and Walton and the Malay girl had gone in front and bowed their acknowledgments. This evening the call was more vociferous than ever, but instead of jumping to his feet and walking to the side as was customary, neither of the performers moved an inch.

"Here, jump up and go on in front!" I cried, hurrying to the prostrate Walton. But finding that he still remained motionless I bent over him and shook him.

"What's the matter?" cried Maude Sinclair, coming hastily to my side. "Has he fainted?"

"Run for a doctor!" I cried to nobody in particular. "This looks serious."

It was serious; I had seen more than one person die in my life and I recognised that I was now in the presence of death. I had Walton carried to his dressing-room and I insisted upon the last scene being gone through somehow, though before the actors began their final speeches I went on and apologised for the non-appearance of the favourite actor on the ground that he had been taken ill suddenly.

Maude Sinclair and the others thought that Walton had fainted or fallen into a fit; they did not guess the truth and so, although rather shaken, they went through their parts.

Geoffrey Walton was dead; an examination showed that he had been scratched on the hand by the Malay dagger and had died from the effects of a virulent poison.

There was an inquest, in the course of which, evidence was given to the effect that the dagger had been immersed in some Eastern poison, the exact nature of which I was unable to understand, although the analyst gave a copious explanation in very learned language. The conclusion was arrived at that this poison had been on the weapon when brought to England, and that death was due to misadventure.

Jenny Sinclair was too ill to give evidence; the shock seemed to have affected her mind and she was laid up with an attack of brain fever from which she never recovered.

On the day of her death she was conscious for an hour or so, and during that short period she confided to her foster-sister that she had deliberately inflicted the scratch in order to kill Walton.

"I found out by accident that the weapon was poisoned," she told Maude. "I knew what he was, for I met one of his victims outside the theatre. I wanted to save you, and I warned him, but he only laughed at me. I might have spoken to you, but you were infatuated and would not have listened. I learnt that you were going off with him, and I went round to his lodgings on the last day of the run of that drama and once more warned him not to carry out his plans. He scorned me once more and I killed him to save you."

Maude was horror-stricken and inclined to treat Jenny's assertion about Walton as an hallucination, but there was something so earnest in her tone, and she spoke so sensibly, that Maude's disbelief was weakened. It was finally overthrown when Jenny told her to look in a certain drawer and she would find the address of the woman whom the dying girl had met outside the theatre and to whom she had rendered pecuniary assistance.

* * * * *

No, Maude Sinclair never married. She left the stage and settled down in a South of England town in a small business, but three years afterwards, when I called at the shop, I found that it was in fresh hands and that Miss Sinclair had gone to Australia.

G. KNIGHT.

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Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

XII. HE BUYS A RECIPE FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE POOR.

"We have a gallon kettle in the house, of course?" queried Mr. Bowser after he had reached the end of his cigar the other evening.

"Certainly," replied Mrs. Bowser, "but why should you want a gallon kettle?"

"Do you know how many people die of consumption in Great Britain every year?" he asked in turn.

"No."

"Well, the number is close upon a quarter of a million, and in all but a few cases death ensues because the proper remedies are not obtainable when the dread disease is in its incipient stage. Out of every fifty deaths by consumption forty-nine are poor people, who are not saved because they have no money with which to buy a remedy."

"Well?"

"You—you are talking to me, are you?"

"Well, I—I have a remedy."

"You've got a cure for consumption, which you are going to give away to the poor?"

"That's it, Mrs. Bowser—that's the idea. I can't save 'em all, you know, but if I can rescue five thousand of my fellow creatures from death every year I shall feel amply repaid for the few pounds it will cost. I am going to make a cure for consumption and distribute it free gratis through chemists and physicians."

"That's all nonsense!" exclaimed Mrs. Bowser with considerable tartness in her tones. "You've simply got some new fad to work out, and this turning philanthropist is rubbish. You'd better let consumption alone and cure that corn on your toe."

"You—you are talking to me, are you?" he asked as he put on his spectacles to get a clearer look at her.

"Of course I am."

"And being fully aware that I am your husband?

"But you make me impatient with your fads. Some quack doctor has been trying to get at you."

"Trying to get at *me?* Quack doctor? Woman, I don't want to hear any more such expressions. I don't want my home turned into a nigger minstrel show. If you wish to oppose my idea, founded upon the noblest and grandest sentiments of the human heart, do so, but do it with dignity. You object to my saving five thousand human lives per year, do you?"

"I do."

"You want me to go my way without care while thousands of my fellow beings are marching to their graves?"

"Yes, sir!"

"And not to extend a hand to draw one of them back?"

"Not a hand. You'd better attend to your own business and let the doctors look out for consumptives."

Mr. Bowser stood and glared at her for a full minute. His faced flushed, his ears twitched, and his Adam's apple worked up and down like a toy monkey on a stick.

He had just drawn a long breath to utter a yell when he checked himself and turned away. He had left a number of packages on the hall table, and securing these, he proceeded to the kitchen and asked the cook for the kettle.

"Is it going to be an experiment with gunpowder?" she asked, as she handed it to him.

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"My dear woman," replied Mr. Bowser, as he looked at her sharply, "I think you betray signs of consumption."

"It can't be!"

"But I'm sure of it Do not be alarmed, however. I am about to compound a certain and speedy cure. One bottle will restore you to health, and it won't cost you a halfpenny. I propose to save five thousand lives this year."

"If I've got consumption I'm going straight off to my mother's to-night!" exclaimed the cook, as she untied her apron.

"But you can be saved."

"But I can't wait!"

Away she went to tell Mrs. Bowser and pack her trunk, and Mr. Bowser hadn't got all his stuff mixed in the kettle when he heard the front door shut behind her.

He expected a call and a protest from Mrs. Bowser, but she did not appear. He had brought home treacle, gin, gum arabic, licorice and two or three other things, which were to be mixed with the yolks of six eggs and heated over the fire, and he needed no help.

He had mixed according to a recipe which had cost him a sovereign, but when the compound began to get hot the smell was not agreeable and the taste did not suit his palate.

"While it is the duty of a consumptive to swallow a cure without kicking," he mused as he looked about the pantry, "I might as well mix in something to tickle the palate. I'll just shake in a little ginger. I've heard that consumptives crave for ginger."

The ginger didn't seem to make much difference, and he grated in a nutmeg and then poured in half a bottle of vanilla.

He was slowly stirring the contents of the kettle and wondering if a lemon or two would make it just right when the compound suddenly foamed up and boiled over.

As it ran over the edges of the kettle there was a flash, and a sheet of flame and smoke leapt to the ceiling. Mr. Bowser was in his slippers, and just after the burst of flame had singed off his eyebrows and curled his hair he felt something hot strike his feet.

Mrs. Bowser heard a yell followed by a couple of jumps which jarred the house, but she sat still. She heard Mr. Bowser strike a chair and pitch over it, scramble up and bang open the back door, but she held her chair. Then she knew that he was galloping about the back yard, and she heard people crying "Fire!" but it was not until the firemen were banging away at the door that she rose up. The house was full of smoke and smell, but there was no fire.

A sheet of flame and smoke leapt to the ceiling.

The firemen had been gone ten minutes, and most of the smell had floated out upon the night air, when Mr. Bowser entered the sitting-room and stood before her.

He was a dilapidated man. He had suffered for the cause of humanity. He lifted his right foot and his left foot—he gestured with his right arm and his left arm. He wanted to say something—he wanted to utter hundreds of words with six syllables, but his feelings overcame him.

"Yes, I know," quietly replied Mrs. Bowser, as she looked at him. "Yes, you want to say that I made another attempt to assassinate you, and that the limit has been reached and separation must follow, but you can't get it out. If I were you I'd go to bed."

And like one in a dream he dragged his legs after him from stair to stair, wondering and wondering, but speaking no word, and an hour later, when Mrs. Bowser followed him, she found him in bed with the clothes drawn up to his chin and a look of benevolence on his face.

He was dreaming of saving the lives of five thousand of his fellow creatures annually, but as she gazed on him his toes began to twitch, the look of benevolence faded into one of surprise, and the odour of singed hair filled the room and made him sneeze in a lonely way.

M. QUAD.

Next week: He Comes Home Good-natured and Goes to Bed Happy.

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MR. DARBY.

OUR boarding-house was a peaceful home for all of us until Mr. Darby arrived. The trouble with Mr. Darby was that he held opinions. Rather, he didn't hold them. He threw them at people.

Mrs. Cross, our landlady, a widow of enduring charms, had certain positive convictions which she had laid before us many times, without once arousing a contradiction. This was before Mr. Darby came. She made many assertions which none of us indorsed, but we held our tongues in the interest of harmony.

Mr. Seabury had no wish to argue with her because he was fully occupied with his consuming passion for Miss Beatty, the music student, who sat directly opposite him at the table.

As for the others, we had no line of controversy to begin with, and, besides, Mrs. Cross was such a superior woman that it would have been folly for any one of us to enter the lists against her.

Therefore, although Mrs. Cross was a woman of resisting fibre and combative skill, our boarding-house was a peaceful home for all of us, as I said in the beginning—until Mr. Darby came.

Mr. Darby was over forty, slightly bald, with a reddish-grey moustache and a square chin, indicating determination. He was a consulting engineer—an architect or something else so technical that it was beyond our comprehension—and when he gave an opinion he did it in a dry, dictatorial way, after the manner of a college professor. He seemed to believe that his decision always put an end to arguments and was not subject to appeal.

The first evening at dinner, after we had met him and after the dinner had progressed as far as the roast beef, Mrs. Cross had been telling of her shopping experiences that day, and she concluded her narrative with this statement:

"Well, anyway, the women in the shops have much more tact than the men."

Mr. Darby elevated his eyebrows in surprise, and then said, very coolly:

"I don't think so."

Think of it! The new boarder had dared to contradict Mrs. Cross. He had invoked the thunderbolt and seemed quite unconcerned as to the results.

"My opinion is based on several years' experience as a shopper," said Mrs. Cross. "I cannot believe that you have ever done very much shopping, Mr. Darby."

"When I say that women have less tact than men I am merely stating a fact which is proved by any careful observation of the sexes and is corroborated by all the history of the world," said Mr. Darby. "It may be that here and there you will find an exceptional woman who is more skilful as a tactician than a certain man, exceptionally stupid, with whom she may be compared for the moment. But if we must generalise, then I say, without fear of successful contradiction, that men, both in shops and elsewhere, are more tactful than women."

With that they locked horns, figuratively speaking. They discussed the sexes from every known standpoint. Mrs. Cross was sharply sarcastic. Mr. Darby was cool and opinionated, seeming to hold his adversary in good-natured contempt.

Our happy little dinner gathering, usually given over to good-natured bantering and frivolity, had become a debating club, in which Mr. Darby and Mrs. Cross were the contending orators, while we sat as awed listeners.

That evening, after four of us had gone up to Martin's room to smoke our evening pipes, we held an indignation meeting and agreed that Darby was an egotistical nuisance, and that the sooner Mrs. Cross got rid of him the better it would be for all concerned.

Martin was especially cut up. Martin was a quiet little man, as gentle and inoffensive as a house cat, and we had long suspected that he was in love with Mrs. Cross, although no one believed that he would ever summon the courage to declare himself. We had twitted him frequently as to his supposed fondness for the landlady, and his blushes had been a virtual confession.

And on this evening, after the first of the many Cross-Darby debates, his anger at the new boarder showed that he really cared for Mrs. Cross.

"I tell you, no gentleman would sit at a table and contradict a lady as that fellow did this evening," said Martin, with great warmth.

"That's right," we said.

"He is a conceited ninny," said Martin, puffing his pipe with great violence.

We agreed with him.

As I have intimated, the debate as to the tactfulness of women was but the first of many battles in which all the rhetorical and logical weapons were wielded with tremendous violence.

If Mrs. Cross advanced a proposition Mr. Darby would be sure to take exception to it, either in whole or part,

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and instanter the duel would begin. It would continue throughout the dinner hour and would be resumed with unabated fury after we had gone into the parlour. Usually the men would excuse themselves and go up to Martin's room to smoke, and say mean things about Darby.

Miss Beatty, the music student, and the two other young ladies of our strange household would also escape and usually Mr. Darby and Mrs. Cross would be left together to continue the struggle indefinitely. Of course, these debates ended, as all debates must end, with each debater still unconvinced and defiant.

The only satisfaction we derived from witnessing these daily conflicts was in the knowledge that Darby had met his match in Mrs. Cross. She was just as well-read and just as resourceful and quick-witted as he was, and sometimes she dealt a home thrust that delighted all of us and even aroused Martin from his quiet melancholy.

Poor Martin! How he hated that man Darby!

One night we were sitting in his room engaged in our usual occupation, that is, we were denouncing Darby.

"Think of it," said Martin. "That scoundrel is simply badgering the life out of Mrs. Cross.' He seems to take a fiendish delight in contradicting everything she says. As a self-respecting woman she dare not allow him to trample her underfoot, and he has not the gallantry to acknowledge himself in the wrong, and you see the result. They are sitting in the dining-room at this minute, engaged in some argument that will last half the night."

"Why don't you go down there and rescue her?" asked Seabury. "She'll be glad to have anyone come in and put an end to the dispute."

"I wish I could," said Martin.

"Why not?" I asked, "Just wander into the room and ask Mrs. Cross to play something. I tell you, Martin, it's your duty to protect her from that man."

"Do you think so?" he asked seriously.

"Most assuredly."

"Well, I believe I will go down for a little while."

He went out of the room, and in less than a minute he was back again, very pale and holding to the door-knob.

"What's the matter?" we asked.

"I didn't go in," he said in a whisper, "I looked in first. It was quiet in there. I walked in—and—and—he had his arm round her!"

"What!" exclaimed Seabury.

"It's a fact. They were both on the sofa and he had his arm round her."

"Why, I thought she despised him," said Seabury "They're always in argument."

"That's the way some people enjoy themselves," I suggested. "We'll tell Miss Beatty what Martin saw and have her find out all about it."

Miss Beatty at once confronted Mrs. Cross with the convicting evidence.

"It is true," said Mrs. Cross. "I regard Mr. Darby as the most brilliant man I have met since my first husband died. He is a strong man—a man of intellectual power and deep convictions."

Mr. Darby told Miss Beatty that he had always wanted to marry a woman of brains, and not a mere doll. The landlady was his kind of a wife.

And so they were married after a courtship marked by numerous fierce and entertaining controversies.

And Martin—our dear old Martin, who had worshipped her from afar all these years—was quite unconsidered.

Poor Martin!

MISS ASKET: "What animal would you prefer most for a pet?"

Miss Anteek: "Man."

"WHAT is fiction, pa?"

"Any story that says 'they married and lived happy ever after.'"

FRED: "They tell me at your office that you are only one of the clerks. And you said you were a director."

Charles: "So I am, I address envelopes."

JONES: "Hello, old chap! Haven't seen you for an age. How are you?"

Johnson (from the provinces): "I'm not feeling as well as I might. I've enjoyed very poor health during the past year."

Jones: "Well, I'm glad you enjoy it; most people don't."

ODD JOBBER: "I wish I'd got my brother on this heer job with me."

Inquiring Employer: "Why your brother specially?"

Odd Jobber: "Why, ye see, sir, he's got rare cheek on him, my brother has. Why, he'd think no more of asking for a pot of beer over a job like this than nothink."

SERVANT: "Oh, miss, that Mr. Borem do be coming here again. There's no use tellin' him y'r not at home, for he'll just push past me an' say he'll wait till yer come back."

Miss Beauti: "Then, for mercy's sake, tell him plainly that I'm engaged. Do it in such a way that he'll not try to stop."

Servant: "Yis, mum."

Mr. Borem (a minute later): "Is Miss Beauti at home."

Servant: "Yis, sor, but she do be engaged, and the felly she's engaged to do be waitin' in the parler fur yez wid a club."

WE WANT TO HAMMER IT INTO YOUR HEAD - -

that it is stupid to go home on a Friday night without taking

THE ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY NEWS

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At Jealousy's Door.

"If this is active service, give me as much as you can," said the man as he gazed at the girl sitting on the turfy ground a couple of yards away. "To be able to while away an hour or two every day of my blessed existence in company like this,"—he threw all feeling into his glance—"is compensation for even facing Boer bullets the remaining hours of the day."

The girl bent her head under his admiring gaze. As she mumbled something scarcely audible, while her blushes proclaimed her feelings, the two were joined by another girl—like her companion in many respects of feature, though her face was certainly not so pleasing.

"Hello, Captain Brownton, you here still? Why, Dorothy told me you had gone long ago."

She turned a quick glance upon the other girl, and in that moment such a look of concentrated hatred passed over her face as Brownton, who just noticed it, could scarcely have conceived on the face of a girl who might have been positively beautiful.

In a moment, however, the expression vanished.

The Captain's first companion raised her eyes to her cousin—for the two girls were cousins—and, though in evident confusion, said:

"I—er—thought he had, but I happened to meet him up here—that's all, Jess."

He helped her out of her difficulty.

"Yes! Miss Dorothy caught me prowling round. The General's getting anxious to get at these blessed Boers, and, upon my word, at present we have not a notion, I believe, how to outflank them."

He overdid his explanation rather.

"This awful country is a terror for civilised troops."

But Jess Worburn was not deceived. She felt that these past few weeks had had the result she dreaded. In the comparatively slack time certain of the officers had had in the period of inactivity, Brownton had became acquainted with the Worburns, English farmers in the North of the Colony.

He was a perfect specimen of the best type of English officer, and day after day spent dallying in the company of two bright and handsome English girls, made more *piquante* by their Colonial training, had had the result of making him an admirer of both at first, and an ardent adorer of Dorothy Worburn now.

Alas, for their happiness, they both had given him their hearts.

Dorothy, more confiding and of a less suspicious nature than Jess, little imagined her cousin was her rival.

Jess, however, was quite certain. Masking her chagrin and anger, she lightly chaffed the other two as they walked towards the British camp a short way, and parted from Brownton till another short period of leave.

As it turned out, he was not able to go to Worburn's farm for a couple of days. The division was evidently being prepared for an advance and time was more fully occupied.

He wended his way outside the British lines and strode forward over the veld towards the object of his wishes. Other thoughts struggled for the mastery to-day, however. General Sir Luard Knight, in command, to whose staff Brownton was attached, was particularly desirous of obtaining information of the country on the west of the Boer encampment.

A thorough soldier, and with a more than usual spirit of adventure in him, Brownton was puzzling in what way he might be of service to his Chief. Reconnaissance had produced no result, and spies could bring no definite information.

Walking towards the farm, Brownton became aware of a lithe figure sauntering ahead apparently quite unaware of his approach. He knew Dorothy's form, and all thoughts of external affairs were banished. Hurrying up to her, "Did you know I was behind?" he said, as he pressed her hand.

"Yes, I wanted to see you. Do you know, I know of a path by which your men can easily get round the Boer camp? At least, I think so. You see that road running behind the farm over the rise? Well, the other side, it turns sharp off to the west, and at the corner where it turns there is a path scarcely noticeable from outside which goes right round to the rear of the Boers."

She coloured at the look which Brownton was giving her. His eager attention to the girl had given way to a much tenderer emotion as he watched her.

She found he was not taking in the details and began again. He clasped her hands and told her there was something else he wanted to say of more immediate importance than the circumvention of the Boers.

Little pressing of his suit was sufficient to gain her ready answer, and as they approached the house their talk was not of the tactics of war.

Little did they know that Jess Worburn had watched them from the outset, and Brownton would have felt puzzled to reconcile the momentary look of demoniac hatred which disfigured her handsome face when she knew what had happened, with the fact that the plan which Dorothy was so eagerly afterwards disclosing to Brownton for the discomfiture of the Boers, was really due to Jess.

It was not for another hour that Brownton was able to give his attention to the particulars of the plan shown to him.

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The two cousins lived alone with Dorothy's father. The latter gave a provisional consent to his daughter's engagement to Brownton.

His farm was outside the British lines, but the farmers in this part of the Cape had escaped the raidings of the Boers, probably from the fact of the nearness of the British troops.

His patriotism was not of a particularly active nature, and the conspirators judged it best to keep him in the dark about their plans.

Day after day for nearly a week Brownton went to the farm and made himself master of the route—on one or two occasions taking a brother officer with him.

General Knight had great faith in his Staff Officer, and allowed Brownton every facility to perfect his plans.

* * * * *

A layer of thin haze hanging over the veld heralded the morning of the British advance.

The plans had been carefully prepared.

The path by which the circumventing movement was to take place was unnoticeable to any but the keenest observer, and even then appeared to lead to the foot of a steep slope which was practically an *impasse*.

From Dorothy Worburn, however, Brownton had learnt that there was a gap unseen in the distance, which, once found, would be the means of the surrounding of the Boer position.

Half a battalion was to be sent forward to the foot of the slopes which they were not to scale till the main body was ready to enter the gap. There would thus be little chance of a successful trap for the column being laid by the Boers.

Brownton was with the main body. The column advanced with as little commotion as possible till they were close to the gap. The order to halt was given and word passed to the flanking party to quietly ascend the slope, and, if seen, to keep the enemy's attention as far as possible. Gradually the men climbed the slope.

The order to enter the gap was given. The path was nearly half a mile long. The movement continued till the head of the column had reached the middle of the pass.

Suddenly a terrific fusillade burst upon the imperial troops from the tops of the surrounding hills. For a moment all was disorder—the attack was so unexpected. Then in the midst of men who were falling right and left, the officers gave the word to retire. It seemed too late. The sides of the hills were crowded with Boers who held an enormous advantage both from position and owing to the admirably arranged surprise. The battalion which was ascending the hills to attract their attention was helpless.

In the meantime, Brownton, completely astounded, was endeavouring to collect his thoughts. In a vague way he felt he would be held responsible for the business, and, in a more definite manner, the awful thought that perhaps Dorothy had led them into a trap, intruded itself.

The idea he thrust from him. Slowly the column was retreating, losing men at every step. Brownton, with agonised face, turned to the officer in command and besought him to let him go to the flanking battalion, and endeavour to do something there.

The request was refused. There could be but one thought in the minds of all in command.

Suddenly at the top of the gap Brownton caught sight of a woman's dress as she ran towards the back.

In the distance he knew it was one of the girls, and his only thought being of Dorothy, he felt that it was she who had—awful thought—brought the Boers to entrap the British.

Life no longer had any charm. Might he die! How could he live—branded a traitor, or, at the least, the blundering betrayer of his comrades, and, worst of all, to know that Dorothy had betrayed him.

All this time those in the rear, in full possession of what had happened, were doing their utmost to storm the hill, and the Boers, not quite prepared for such numbers, were gradually giving way.

In front, men were dropping fast: and, at last, Brownton was hit. Almost a feeling of relief went through him as he fell, to lose consciousness the next moment.

When he came to himself in another few minutes, the battle roar seemed as great as ever in his ears, but he was conscious of something unusual. Opening his eyes he found gazing, with pale face and eyes full of tears, at him, Dorothy, murmuring his name and moaning with intense anguish. With a groan he turned from her.

"Go away," he whispered, "Let me die."

Clasping his hand to her bosom she wailed. "But you don't think this of me? Heavens! this is too hard to bear. Oh! how I thought everything had gone well."

And she sank by his side and buried her face in her hands.

Bullets were still flying round them, though they were under comparative cover.

He turned to her.

"What has happened, then? Who told them?"

"I don't know. Jess went out early to lead the other battalion up the hill, and——"

Then the awfulness of an overwhelming conviction swept over her.

Here was the solution of Jess's seeming friendship, in spite of an inevitable feeling that her cousin viewed her as a successful rival.

Jess had deliberately betrayed them for her own jealous ends, and would he die? The feeling of Jess's disloyalty had struck them both now.

Silence reigned unbroken save for the occasional crack-crack of a Boer rifle and the gradually lessening volleys of the retiring party.

Apparently the British were gaining the top of the hill; and the day was not to be lost.

* * * * *

That half hour of silence was the making-up of the bond between the two, and, weeks after, when Brownton had recovered from his wounds, and the whole column had learned from Boer prisoners how a stray bullet had punished Jess for her treachery, he asked Dorothy again for her forgiveness for doubting her, and her answer was good.

STUART BLOFELD.

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New Serial Story. *Begin it To-day.*

EINAR OF THE LONG SWORD.

. . By George C. Wallis . .

Author of "The Winning of Gunhild," "The Gladiator," etc., etc.

SUMMARY.

THIS story of the wooing of Astrid, the daughter of Earl Sweyn, is told by Sigmund, the Skald.

Einar Longsword and Hardrada Hardskull are both wishful to marry the maiden, who has been promised by her father to the latter, but Einar is told that he may proffer his suit if he captures the ship of Edred the Berserk, a notorious pirate, within a year.

While Einar is on the voyage, Hardrada offends Sweyn, and is debarred from paying court to his daughter. After this, another suitor, Othnar Wolf's-fang, arrives, but he does not find favour with Astrid, and accordingly takes his leave after a heated conversation with her and Sigmund.

CHAPTER III. *(continued.)*

I DID not answer, but stood with Astrid as he went plunging over the soft snow on his black pony. Once, when he seemed but a small black dot on the whiteness of the slope that rises up to Saddleback, we saw him stop and come back a few paces. Then he turned and went on and disappeared.

"It is sad work rejecting suitors," quoth Astrid, as we went back to the house. "Would that the gods had not made my face so fair."

"What is done cannot be undone," answered I. "What the Nornas decree will happen, and 'tis no good wishing. Else I had wished away this weakness of mine, which has made me a deedless man, and so barred me from mounting Bifrost's rainbow bridge into Valhalla."

"You had ever a wise tongue, Sigmund," she laughed, and ran within.

Now the weeks passed on, lengthening into months, and the cold and the darkness and silence of the winter grew and waned and went, and the spring came, and the summer, before we had any news of Einar or Hardrada. Our visitors were few, and Othnar Wolf's-fang, we heard, still dwelt sulkily at home. We finished the building of the *Sea-hawk*, which Sweyn had lain down for his son Arvak when he came to man's age, and she and the old *Hofvapnir* and a prize ship, the *Bear*, made a trio of handsome vessels.

The early snowdrops died, the fifa-flowers bloomed plenteously, the frost-lilies lay around the tarns, the gentians clustered on the hills, and the whortle-berries dotted the sunnier slopes, before the longed-for tidings came.

And then one day a battered ship, with one man standing alone at her helm, came slowly up the silent fiord.

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT EINAR FOUND AT NORTH-HOLD.

IT was in the glitter of a bright, frosty noon that the *Eagle* came to North-hold. The kestrels screamed discordantly overhead, the blue hawks flew to their nests on the stunted firs growing on the high cliff, the shadows of the mountains lay silent on the still water. Out of the shadows into the light the vessel glided noiselessly, her white sail spread to the scant breeze, and Einar stood forward upon her deck, shading his eyes with his left hand, and gazing at the shore.

Everything there seemed deathly calm; the chilly wind carried few murmurs of noise with its motion; the frost that lay melting on the landing-stage was unmarked by the print of feet.

Einar sprang off as the side of the *Eagle* rubbed along the woodwork of the rude pier, and followed by Algar and Brun, went up the well-remembered path to the old homestead.

The granary door was swinging open when they reached it, and within, the rats were holding high revel.

A fierce exclamation escaped Einar's lips, and, gripping Longsword involuntarily, he strode on. His haggard face wore a terrible expression; the veins of his forehead were plainly to be seen beneath the pallor of his skin.

At last they came to where the great hall had been, and at what they saw, stood as men frozen into statues. There yet remained some of the outer walls where the earth had been banked up; but all within was charred ruin and dull ash, the melting rime of the last night's frost looking strange upon the black and burnt-out embers of the massive beams.

Twice, thrice, the three men walked round and across the heap of ruins, speechless. So fierce had been the fire, so utterly had it consumed and overthrown, that no trace of any familiar thing was to be seen. But Einar kicked aside a heap of black and crinkled woodwork, and there lay beneath a heap of human bones.

They searched again at that, but found no more. They silently counted the bones and lay them straight, side by side. All who had been in the hall had perished together, in what awful agony and with what Norse courage will never be known—and there had been eleven of them. And then, from the ash-covered ground, Einar picked up something dully red. It was the blade of his father's battle-axe, and part of the shaft, charred and crumbling, was yet in it.

Now Einar knew, beyond doubt, that he was an orphan. He uttered a swift cry of rage, then, leaning on the shoulder of Brun, stared awhile at the bones, saying nothing. And his comrades did not dare to disturb his misery.

Now the wind freshened, biting their faces keenly and stirring the light ashes at their feet into little grey eddies, and Einar looked up and shook himself.

"'Tis no use pining over what is done," said he sternly, "but 'twill be great use paying the debt in full. Weeping is women's work; that will be men's. This thing is too foul and cowardly a deed to be settled by the Folk-Ting; at the point of my sword alone will I end it.

"Now listen, Algar Erikson and Brun the Silent. By the keenness of this blade Longsword, which was my father Harald's, and with which he slew Turgrimm and won Gunhild, do I vow to slay Edred and win Astrid; by the weight of my axe do I vow to split Hardrada's skull without mercy. I charge you both, when we come face to face, to leave him to me. I will strike him down alone, to the nethermost depths of Hela! By Odin and by Thor, by Heimdall and by all the gods of Asgard, I make this vow: That before ever I wed Astrid, even though I slay Edred to-morrow, I

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will kill Hardrada Hardskull! Hear me, and forget nothing!"

And Einar raised Longsword to the sky in his right hand, and vowed again the most solemn vows that can bind a Viking, and Algar and Brun raised their blades also, and swore to remember and to help.

Then they dug a deep space in the floor of the ruin and reverently put the bones within, covering them gently with the grey embers.

"That will do until I come again, revenged, to build up the house," said Einar. "But this broken battle-axe I will take with me. It will serve to let Hardrada know, when I meet him, where I have been. It may also serve to chip a slice from his hard crown."

"I shall begrudge you that sport," said Algar.

Brun said no word, but looked the more, and the three men went back to the ship. The place was utterly deserted and silent; what need to stay? Though it was now well past noon, and the breeze was so strong that it gave promise of a storm, the *Eagle* put out from the fiord and plunged her nose into the froth of the rising waves.

They put before the wind, which came fierce and cold from the north, from the clutches of the Frost-God, Thrymm, and drove along the shores two days, being much put to to avoid the crags and headlands and to keep the vessel baled. At Nidaros they ran into harbour and cast anchor to avoid the fury of the storm, knowing that the Tronds were peaceable folk. While they stayed there a trader put in, with news of Edred the Bearsark. He had just escaped pillage himself, he said, by the lucky chance that Edred was burdened with a Viking ship that he had captured, and which bore evidences of a stern struggle.

Einar smiled when he heard this—the first smile his men had seen on his face since leaving North-hold—and questioned the trader closely.

"He was beating up for Strongness, near which, on a steep rock, he has his house," said the man; but, "weakened as he is, and strong a lot of men as you have here, I would urge on you not to attack him without a greater force. His ship is of huge size and wonderful speed, and his crew still very large. You seem goodly champions, 'twould be a pity to throw your lives away."

"Wise words that fall on deaf ears," said Einar. "Call the men together, Algar, and hasten them with the water and food. We sail to-day."

The men obeyed readily, for they were proud of his strength and skill, and glad to see him more himself again, and, amid the admonitions of the Tronds, the *Eagle* once more put out to sea.

The water yet rose in white-crested mountains and fell into glades of glassy green, the wind shrieked along the billows and whistled in the cordage and rigging of the ship, her timbers creaked and groaned.

But Brun held to the helm in grim silence, and Algar saw that the rowers kept to their work, and Einar stood at the prow, finding the hissing of the storm around him a fitting accompaniment to the thoughts that burnt within his soul.

Many times they were in danger, and many times Algar was on the point of advising anchorage behind a sheltering bluff, but the vessel lived on, and in the night the storm abated. At dawn they were able to sail and stand nearer inshore and so went on merrily until the next day but two, when Strongness loomed up on the horizon, and they could see the smoke from Edred's house curling black against the fleecy scud of cloud. Here they overtook the *Destroyer*.

Not a moment did Einar hesitate, though he knew that the darkness would soon be upon them after the brief glimmer of the winter sun. The *Eagle* surged on through the sea, sending a splash of foam from each side of her iron beak, and while the men got ready the grappling hooks Einar and his two champions put grease upon their axes and swords, and sang a song of Thor.

"Tyr grant that this outlaw take it not into his head to run," said Einar. "We can scarcely match the speed of that ship."

"The Bearsark will not run," said Algar. "He will not know who we are until we are upon him, and then it will be too late. But you see that big man standing at his side? Leave him to me. I know him by repute to be Edred's brother, Hakon, a very strong man. He shall fall to my axe."

"Or you to his, if Odin has sent for you, which I pray not yet," said Einar.

And now the ships were not a cable's length apart.

CHAPTER V.

HOW EINAR SLEW EDRED THE BEARSARK.

FOAMING through the tossing sea went the *Eagle*, Einar standing sternly in the prow. The *Destroyer* lay still on the water, waiting her antagonist, and her crew were amazed at the daring of the attack. Edred wiped the stains from his broad blade, and looked to his hacked mail. Hakon waved his red axe aloft, and shouted over the lessening distance:

"Come nearer, *Eagle*, and let us pluck your feathers for you! We have plucked land-birds before to-day, and found them good eating!"

They were near enough to see each other clearly now, and Einar said:

"Wise men boast when the fight is over, Killing-Hakon and Bearsark-Edred. Mayhap, the *Eagle* may peck your eyes out before the plucking is done!"

Then Edred called to his men to board the enemy when they touched, and answered:

"Now I know you, Einar Longsword. You are a strong man and think to get fame out of killing me. I have something here that can do the killing!" and his sword flashed in the sunlight.

Then the sharp stem of the *Eagle* rushed at the bulwark of the *Destroyer*, but the latter, under the impulse of one

He died transfixed to the bulwark.

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bank of oars, swerved round, so that the ships lay side by side, and men from both threw grappling chains, making them fast together.

Einar and Algar sprang together on the *Destroyer's* deck, and the rush of their men swept back the Bearsark's crew, weary and sore yet from their last fight, half across the ship. Armod, one of Einar s men, was the first to fall. The dread swing of Killing-Hakon's huge axe caught him and struck him down, and he felt no more. Thorstein, his brother, dashed forward to avenge him; but though he laid low Ord and Hugor, the same axe found him out and ended him. Then Algar got free striking space, and made the ruck of men give way before him and so came at Hakon, and there was a fight worthy to see. But silent Brun followed Einar, guarding his back, and the spears that were thrust at Longsword from behind cost their owners dear.

Now the flght was a fury of confusion, the swaying mass of men pressing now across the deck of the *Destroyer* and now back towards the empty *Eagle*. Einar's men were fewer in number than Edred's by more than a score, but they were stout and fresh and the Bearsark's were tired with fight and striving with the storm. For a time the struggle seemed equal. Of the *Eagle's* men Kollein fell, and Biorn and Skallagur; of the enemy, Mizur and Thorein and Sigurdson, and Iron-Toe Ounod; and Brun had an arm wound, and Hakon's helm was split and a red streak trickled down his face.

Edred and Einar were at last face to face and sword rang on sword, but so wary were these two, so keen of eye and strong of arm that for awhile no scratch was come of by either.

"You have Loki's own luck!" said Einar, as a shearing stroke of Longsword was foiled by an upward flash of the other's blade. "I think you cannot be wanted so badly in Hela; but, nevertheless, they must have you."

"After you, cub; not before!" growled Edred, as the great thrust with which he mostly ended his man was turned by Einar's shining steel. "But you are a tough foe, by Thor's hammer."

"Ah, you talk now, Bearsark!" laughed Einar, and again their swords crossed and rang, spark sprays leaping from them in the dying light.

Near them Algar and Hakon yet fought; but the Killer was overmatched at last.

"The Valkyrs ride to-night, Hakon!" cried Algar. "You have been a red-hand; but you fight well, and Odin wants your aid against the coming of grey-wolf Fenrir."

The battle-axes smote and clashed, and Hakon's shaft broke under Algar's blow. The round edge of Algar's axe tore through the mail on Hakon's shoulder, tore through his byrnie and reached his heart, and that was at once his bane.

A great cry rose from the *Eagle's* men at the sight, and they rushed on the foe with fresh vigour, driving them back towards the high poop. Algar saw a Dane who had feigned death creep over the side of the *Destroyer* and upon the *Eagle*, a glowing firebrand in his grasp. The night was fast coming on, and the glare was seen by others. Algar's spear flew at the man, and three more, and he died transfixed to the bulwark, the brand falling into the sea.

Einar swept the Bearsark off his feet and raised him over his shoulder.

Now Edred, seeing this, and Hakon gone and his men beaten, fell upon Einar with the fury of a beast. His eyes glared red in their sockets, he foamed at the mouth. The Bearsark fit came upon him, giving him the strength of ten men. Einar gave way before the whirling flashes of his foe's broad blade, and some cried that Longsword's time was come. But he was wary, reserving his strength, and though he was damp from three wounds, he had no vital hurt.

The sun sank in a cold red heap of cloud behind them, and the wind howled dismally along the sea, sending the wet spume stinging into the faces of the men who fought on the drifting ships. Brun was down, unable to use his arm, and Algar took his place. Of Edred's men there were now no great champions left, and so the fight died out because of the darkness and of the weariness of the combatants, and all stood to watch the struggle of their leaders.

Now Einar slipped on the wet deck, and Edred's blade shone over him, and a cry of exultation came from Edred's frothed lips. But Longsword smote up and caught the Bearsark in the left shoulder, and Einar was afoot again before the great blow fell. Then he, too, caught something of the Bearsark fury, and the fight was awful to see.

At last Edred's madness passed. He became cunning,

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and by a false stroke lured Einar off his guard. Another stroke sent Longsword spinning from his hand, and Einar was in an evil plight. But just then, Brun lifted his head up, and shouted: "Close with him; grip him!" and before Edred could shorten the stroke of his great blade, Einar had dashed in under it and seized him round the waist, and lifted him almost off his feet. At that, Edred threw down the sword and grasped in turn, and there, on the slanting deck, in the dim shine of the stars and the new moon, they heaved and swayed, and lifted and groaned.

"'Tis queer foothold, and one needs the wrestling shoes!" gasped Einar, "but now I am your master, Edred!"

For answer, the other set his teeth the harder, and strove the fiercer, and the two reeled about in a fast embrace. They staggered, tugging and straining, towards the windward bulwark, against which the spray, borne on the wind, dashed in white foam, and as they neared it a thought came to Einar.

He shifted his foothold suddenly, and while Edred made a great effort to throw him, made fast his grip in a better way. Despite the cold, the perspiration stood in beads upon them, ran down their faces in trickling rivulets, and rose from them in grey steam. Once, twice Einar put forth his strength and failed; then, for the third time, when men cried out that he was spent and Edred slackened his hold somewhat, Einar exerted all his muscle in one fierce straining heave and swept the Bearsark off his feet, and raised him over his shoulder and cast him behind him, head first, over the bulwark into the sea.

And that was how Einar Longsword slew Edred the Bearsark.

"He will not die by Odin's mark," said Algar, peering into the night but seeing no trace of him, "though he has enough marks upon him. Well, he has sent many into Rana's net in his time; it is fit that he should go there at last. And now what to do with these men of his? Shall we finish them and cast them after him?"

"Nay, I am weary of fight, and have already fulfilled Sweyn's chief condition," said Einar, leaning against the mast. "If they will give in to us, and help us to work the ship to Nidaros, we will let them go free after."

"It is a foolish scruple, lad," growled wounded Brun. "They are all rats, and will live to nibble your doors some day."

"That is as it may be," said Einar; "but methinks Odin does not want them yet. And I have in mind now what my mother Gunhild said when last she spoke with me; that there was a new Faith in the South, which bade men kill not except in a just cause or in defence of self."

"I have heard of the White Christ faith," said Brun, scornfully. "'Tis a nithing's creed. But do as you will, Einar; only mark my saying."

When it was put to the remnant of Edred's men whether they would yield or fight, they wisely chose the first course, and so the chains were unloosed, and the sails furled, and the anchors let down. They made good of the night where they were, and with the dawn and a quieter sea, sailed for Nidaros.

Einar was not disposed to lay Strongness waste, as his men desired, nor to risk the *Destroyer* in search of Hardrada, so there was nothing to do but to lay in harbour until their wounds were cured and the *Eagle* was put into proper repair and made taut for sea.

Men came from far south to see Einar as he lay at Nidaros, for never had they thought to see a man who could take Edred the Bearsark in his arms and throw him in fair wrestle. And when Einar told of his feud with Hardrada there were more men to swear service to him than the *Eagle* would hold, and the Tronds vowed to keep the *Destroyer* for him in safety against all comers.

When the worst rigour of the winter was past Einar put out from the river with a full and merry crew. They sang a song to Frey as the galley went stately down to the sea, the light glittering on the golden head of the eagle at the prow, on the unbroken rows of shining shields along each bulwark, on the banks of oars that rose and fell with rythmic regularity in and out of the deep blue water.

Einar's face alone wore no smile. The picture of the charred ruin of North-hold was yet strong before his eyes, and as yet he had taken no step towards vengeance. Algar and Brun, who were well again, muttered together as they watched him, but said nothing openly.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MEETING OF HROLF AND HARDRADA.

Now when the *Vulture* passed the *Long Dragon* in the fiord below Raven's-nest, Hardrada Hardskull laughed uneasily, and spoke thus to his man, Alfdane:

"We are well out of there, troll, methinks! By the sourness of Othnar's visage he has heard the news which we kept to ourselves so well, and has gone up to tell it. If we set foot in Raven's-nest again, my cunning troll, it will not be in peace. What think you?"

Alfdane, who was a short, dark-haired man, laughed a fey laugh, and said:

"If not in peace, then in war, Hardrada—or in stratagem. Last night I read the runes that are written in the stars for keen eyes to see, and I read that I should come again, with few men, to Raven's-nest, and that Einar should at last fall into your hands. Further than that I could not read, but I saw flashes of ruddy light, and heard the clashing of axes and swords and the rush of a great ship coming through the sea. And because I have a grudge against Einar, because his father slew mine, what I read gave me joy."

"I know little of such were-work as yours, Alfdane," said Hardskull, "but I do know that you have a tireless tongue. Yet so far you have been a good prophet. Can you tell me whether I shall win Astrid or not?"

"That I cannot, Hardrada, but if you will let me have the slaying of Einar when you have got him it shall not be owing to the slowness of my wits if she be not your bride within the year. And if things befall as I think, I have this plan ready."

And he bent and whispered in Hardrada's ear so that not even their own men should know, and when the tale was told there was an evil smile on both faces, and Hardrada's smile broke into a laugh horrid and grim.

"We will drink deep of Bragi's cup that night, troll!" cried he.

First they steered for North-hold, "For where," said they, "will the young wolf be but in the old wolf's lair?" Finding that deserted, however, they put the *Vulture* about and went north, seeking news. The storm that drove Einar into Nidaros drove them on to the Lofotens, far out of harm's way. Raging sorely, Hardrada harried the peaceful folk of the islands unmercifully, victualling the ship *strang-hög*, and drawing upon himself many curses—and something more.

When they were out at sea again, the first rough squall discovered a leak that came near sending them all to Rana, and they were forced to run for the nearest land and beach the dragon high and dry. And by the time she was mended, and sea-fit, the fierce frost held everything in an iron grip, and the days were too short for voyaging. So the winter passed, and long after Einar had slain Edred the *Vulture* lay inactive in the north. With the breaking of winter's spell her oars flashed out again, and she breasted the waves, hastening south.

It was breaking light on a white, frosty morning when the *Vulture* was beating up against the wind off Strongness Rock. They saw a beacon flare up on the height, and knew where they had been driven in the darkness. Loud and long Hardrada upbraided Alfdane, and having drawn in the

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oars, the dragon slipped back in the wind. Hardskull had no mind to fall into the clutches of Edred. But even while the red-pine oars were yet rattling through the rowlocks, a long ship came foaming out from behind the headland. A great black snake's head, with lolling fangs, curled over her forecastle, a twisted tail over the poop, her ropes and spars were white with rime, and thirty oars flashed on each side of her, beneath the rows of shields. On her wide sail was roughly painted the outlines of a crimson hand.

"'Tis Hrolf Red-Hand, Edred's son!" cried the men of the *Vulture*. "Odin save us now!" And though they were flying before the rising gale, out came the oars again.

But the long ship came on swiftly, overtaking them with ease. She seemed to walk the seas, to glide down the watery valleys towards them as a petrel rides the waves. And presently she was within hailing distance, and Hrolf put his hands to his mouth and roared down the breeze:

"Heave to, there, lest I run you down! Who are you, and know you any news of a Viking named Einar Harald-son, of the Long Sword?"

"That I do!" roared back Hardskull, "for my name is Hardrada, and I am seeking him now for a blood-feud."

"And that am I, also," said Hrolf, as the ships now rode side by side. "I came back from Viking cruise but yester-day, and found at our own garth, instead of my father, but a parcel of frightened women and old men and two of the *Destroyer's* crew who have come up through the snow from Nidaros. And they tell me that Einar has slain my father in open fight and taken his ship. So here I am at sea again, and my ship, which was named the *Sea-Snake*, I have re-named the *Avenger*. And what have you to say?"

Hardrada and his man exchanged scared glances when they heard of Einar's deed, but hated him all the more; and so Alfdane stood forth and spoke for them, telling Hrolf all that he thought needful, and that, from all indications, Einar should not be far from Strongness.

"Then we are friends, Hardrada," said Hrolf Red-Hand, "though I am an outlaw. By Tyr, I vow not to leave you until this Einar be slain, and by my own hand; and if what you say be true, it will not be long before we meet him, for the home waters are small when foes are seeking each other in them. We will hunt him together, Hardrada."

Hardrada agreed only too readily; the compact was made, and the vessels sailed together.

He and Algar got to the helm and held the ship straight before the wind.

CHAPTER VII.

How Hrolf Red-Hand Sank the Avenger.

THUS it was that just past noon on the same day as the *Eagle* lay under the lee of Hargen Spur, sheltering from the fury of the fierce north-easter that was lashing the sea to storm, her crew saw two ships come round the point, and heard a great shout of exultation. One ship bore upon her prow the wicked head of a vulture; the other, the head of a snake; and Brun, who was first to make them out distinctly, knew at once with whom they had to deal.

No urging needed Einar's Norsemen to get out the oars, and send the *Eagle* to meet her enemies in the teeth of the wild gale. The galley leapt towards them like a living thing, and Einar, Algar, and Brun, standing on the roof of the forcastle, sharpened their weapons, and looked to their shields as well as they could in the short time.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

"Southward from Strongness
Fiercely comes Red-Hand;
Comes with him Hard-Skull,
Vulture and *Sea-snake*
Flying together
From Ægir's anger;
Red-Hand and Red-Skull
Both seeking Longsword,
To send him to Rana!"

sang Ragnulf, a Skald, who had come aboard the *Eagle* at Nidaros.

"Well sung!" cried Algar. "But here comes the outlaw son of the Bearsark, whose brother my axe ended, and here also is our old friend Hard-skull, at close quarters. Greeting, friends!"

The ships were near now, but the shriek of the gale tore the words out of Algar's mouth. Yet Hrolf, whose *Avenger* was nearest, understood the ironical air, and sent his spear hissing at the champion. It missed him, but tore through the taut sail of the *Eagle*, rending it from corner to corner, and the craft lay at the mercy of the wind.

"Hard round with the helm and board her!" cried Einar. "Never mind Hard-skull's ship. The Storm-God rides the waves to-night, and none of us will die straw deaths."

"It is a good rede," said Brun, as the men stood ready to cast the hooks over the gulf of raging sea that was yet between them. "But what said I about letting Edred's men go free? I see two of them aboard there—the rats have nibbled already. It is dangerous to fight two foes at once, even for you, Longsword."

"The All-Father knows best," said Einar shortly, "and the tale of my defeat is yet to tell. . . . Be ready to meet me, Hrolf Red-Hand, so that I can throw you over to the fishes, as I threw your father!"

Then the ships crashed together with a noise that was heard above the roar of the storm, and Einar's men made her fast. With a wild cheer the Norsemen sprang into the waist of the *Avenger*, and from the poop of the *Eagle* Ragnulf urged them on with wild songs. At first the crush of men was so great that none could get striking room for their heavy weapons, and daggers had much to do. While they thus struggled, some of Hrolf's men signalled to the *Vulture*, and she strove to beat round to leeward of the *Eagle*, and board her from the open side, so as to get Einar's men between two fires. But the storm was now so furious that this was no easy task.

The sea lay almost calm for a moment after the vessels had gripped, then broke into thousands of white-crested hillocks, as the fierce tongues of the wind forked along it.

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Then towards the lowering sunset-arch thundered the trampling horses of Aëgir. The sky went inky black, save for the lemon glare of that arch in the west, and the swift rush of the wind, when its full fury burst over the labouring vessels, bent their masts like willows, and flattened once more the waves around them. The high wall of water that rose white in the north-east came curling, and foaming, and hissing towards them, its roaring top plainly visible in the flash of the lightnings that danced before it, and before it reached them there fell on the decks a few big drops of rain. Then it reached them and passed them, hurling the three ships forward like floating logs caught in the vortex of the Maelström, and the rain came down in a pouring deluge.

It was a question whether the ships would live long in such a wild sea; but, heedless of that, the fight on the *Avenger's* deck raged with unabated fury.

Hrolf's man, Sigvald, was the first to fall when Brun's axe got room to whirl, but in recovering himself from the stroke Brun's feet slipped on the reeling deck, and Hrolf's sword gave him his bane before Algar could stop the blow. Algar wounded Red-hand in the cheek, but so uncertain was the light, so fearfully the vessels pitched and tossed on the mountainous sea that he could not follow the advantage. Indeed, no man could tell rightly where his blow would fall, and not always friend from foe.

Towards the stern Einar had cleared a space with the dread sweeps of Longsword's razor edge, and thither Hrolf gradually worked his way. Twice he came near to being crushed under the rain of blows and the fall of parts of the rigging, but at last he and Einar stood face to face, and as well as the darkness and the flying spindrift would let them, thrust and slashed at each other.

Hrolf fought well, for he was young and lithe of limb, but he had not the hardness of Einar's muscle, and so was slowly borne back. Yet the spray upthrown from the bow of the ship as it rushed through the storm came right along the deck and dashed into Einar's face before its wet advance was checked by the gale that howled behind. Through the curtain of its blinding shower Einar could not see far, and his strokes fell short. Once in the contest he gained time to look round him from the poop top, and saw the *Vulture* flying like them before the storm, trying in vain to come to closer quarters; saw Algar labouring fiercely by the mast with his ruddy axe; and saw Ragnulf the Skald transfixed to the woodwork of the *Eagle* by a stray spear.

Suddenly he lost sight of Hrolf in the chaos of night and slaughter, and rushing forward, Longsword joined Algar.

Men kept closed lips now, for the howl of the gale, the wash of the sea, and the creaking and straining of the vessel's rigging and timbers made all talk useless. Hrolf's men were already at bay at the leeward bow, and most of them wounded and sore. But all at once the mast came crashing down, killing in its ponderous fall Gudbrand and Leif, two of Einar's staunchest men. And no sooner was it down than the *Avenger* gave a swift lurch to port, and Alsvid, one of the wounded who lay under the trampling feet, heard the rush of water into the hold. And then Hrolf's face appeared above the combings of the hatchway. Alsvid cried, "'Ware treachery!" with his dying breath, and Einar heard the cry and saw Hrolf, and roared above the violence of the elements, so that Algar and those nearest might understand:

"Back to the *Eagle*, men! Hrolf, the nithing, has scuttled his own ship, thinking to drag us altogether into Rana's net. Back to the *Eagle*, and cast off the grapnels! Let the coward die that way alone!"

There was a fierce struggle as the news spread, but Einar's men were the stronger, and got back to their own ship. Algar, guarded by Longsword, carried the body of silent Brun. As wolves robbed of their prey, Hrolf Red-hand and his men followed, attacking desperately until the last chain was cut or broken and the ships parted. For one brief moment, illumined by the vivid glare of the lightning, Einar saw the *Avenger* staggering on the sea. Then she reeled over and plunged sideways into the boiling cauldron of waters. A short distance away the *Vulture*, both her masts snapped off, lurched helplessly under the lash of the rain and the whip of the wind. When Einar looked again he lay on his back on the deck and saw only the network of ropes ove head and a pall of black cloud under-hotted with streaks of grey.

He was on his feet again at once, and together he and Algar got to the helm and held the ship straight before the wind, and so, through that awful night, the *Eagle* tore on, swerving neither to right nor left, and none of those aboard her looking for or caring about their enemies. Towards morning the Aëgir's wild mood passed, and an hour before dawn the wind was so far abated as to allow of some sail being made. When the day came the cold, drenched, and weary men looked out over a wilderness of dancing waves made bright by the sunshine.

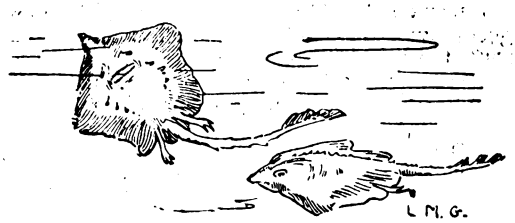
"See, Frey smiles on us already!" cried Algar, pointing to the path of glittering light that lay between the vessel and the risen sun. "I call that a good omen, after the night through which we have come safely. Though we are safe none too soon, for I'll warrant the arms of our men are tired enough of baling. Where to now, Einar?"

"To the nearest shore," quoth Einar gloomily, "if we live till we can reach it. By Odin's beard, we have got little advantage out of this fight, save the death of Brun, and that is a sorry thing for both of us, Algar Eriksön."

"He will be in Valhalla now," said Algar slowly. "I thought last night I heard in the shriek of the storm the cry of the Valkyr that came to lead him over Bifrost Bridge. Never died a braver Viking or truer friend. But 'tis fool's work repining; let us talk of other things—for one, how well met was Hrolf Red-hand and his fate, and whether Hardrada's ship be yet afloat."

But although they did not know it for some time to come, Hrolf Red-hand had escaped from the wreck of the *Avenger* by clinging to a spar, and being washed up against the *Vulture*, had been pulled aboard. It is a saying of the Northlands that evil men live long.

(To be continued.)



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SHORT STORIES ABOUT DOGS.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "Fortune's Sport," by Mrs. C. N. Williamson, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. E. Holdsworth, of 11 Baxendall St., Bradford. Attempts for this week's prize must deal with FUNNY STORIES ABOUT SERVANTS, and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, July 2nd, Post-cards only, please.

A Lost Opportunity.

A TALL official-looking man with a pocket-book in his hand, called upon our friend Bodger, and observed:

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Bodger, but I believe you possess—ah, yes—a black retriever dog with a white patch over his eye."

Visions of unpaid dog licences burst upon Bodger, who with great energy replied:

"Oh, no; oh, dear no; nothing of the kind. He is a poor, stray brute who followed me home, but does not belong to me."

"Oh, indeed," said the stranger, "that is all right then. Only my client, Mr. Robson, accidently shot the dog this morning, and I came round to compromise the matter by offering you five pounds; but of course if he is not your dog—well, good morning." E. H.

Rather Suspicious.

TEDDY'S Aunt Jane, from whom he had great expectations, came to visit him the other day.

Now Aunt Jane holds very decisive views on the temperance question, and when Teddy took the old lady for a walk accompanied by his dog, and the dog walked up to the door of the "Dun Cow" and looked round as if expecting his master to follow, Aunt Jane looked inexpressibly shocked.

"Edward!" she exclaimed icily, "what does the dog mean?"

Teddy is not easily knocked off his perch, however.

"Yes, aunty, isn't he a remarkably intelligent creature? He thinks it's a dairy, because of the cow on the sign, and, you know, he's wonderfully fond of milk."

Explanation accepted, but it was a close shave, wasn't it? E. C.

Settling the Difficulty.

I HAVE a friend who owns a fox terrier pup (also a good-natured old collie dog) which persistently tries to rouse the temper of the latter animal.

The other day it was trying in its usual persevering way to aggravate him, by biting his nose, pulling his ears, hair, and tail.

The old dog put up with it for some time, when suddenly he rose up with a determined air, took the pup by the back of the neck, popped him into a sideboard cupboard, shut the door, lay down against it to keep it from coming open, and calmly slept, regardless of the puppy's yelps. A. Y.

Full-Blooded.

CHARLIE, aged eight, proudly brought home a slinking, bow-legged, and altogether disreputable-looking pup. "Where did you get that dog?" asked his sister contemptuously.

"I bought him from a man for a shilling," said Charlie, with all the pride of ownership.

"Mercy! the idea of paying a shilling for that horrible beast!"

Charlie's eyes flashed. "He isn't horrid. That shows how much a girl knows. The man guaranteed him to be a thoroughbred cur!" J. H. D. G.

A Cross-eyed Dog.

Is that dog of yours good for anything?" he asked of a man as he motioned to a canine that lay behind the door.

"Is he? You just lay your hand on my shoulder and utter a 'whoo.'"

The man did so, and the dog sprang up and bit his owner on the leg and gracefully retired.

"How do you account for that?" asked the inquirer, as a general laugh went round.

"Hang it! I had forgotten that he was cross-eyed," was the reply. "I ought to have put my hand on your shoulder and yelled." W. P.

A Sagacious Terrier.

I USED to take my terrier dog to work with me when I was employed at a certain quarry, where we frequently blasted the rock with dynamite.

One morning he sniffed for a long time about a heap of rock which had been blasted the previous day, and tried to push his head underneath a big stone. At last he gave up the attempt and lay down by the side of the stone.

A couple of hours later I was going to smash this same stone with a hammer, when the dog sprang up, growling, and seized the handle in his teeth.

Such unusual conduct surprised me greatly, but at that instant I caught the glint of brass metal underneath the stone, and stooping down, I drew out an unexploded cartridge.

The dog at once showed the wildest delight.

But why did he guard the spot for hours, and how did he know there was danger in my striking the stone? He took no notice of the empty cartridges lying about. W. B.

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"Them's Ours."

A Lancashire worthy had a dog for sale which he said was a champion rat killer.

A gentleman wanting such a dog, went to see if he could buy it; but the owner not being at home, he was invited to sit down until his return.

The dog being in the room, the gentleman was watching it, when a mouse scampered across the floor; but the dog only stared at it, and made no attempt to catch it.

The owner, on his return, invited the prospective purchaser to the yard to show the dog off.

When a rat came running past, however, the dog only stared, when the gentleman, in astonishment, said:

"Why, he will neither kill rats nor mice."

"Oh," replied the owner, "them's ours, that's why. Wait till he sees somebody else's."

F. B.

An Easy Way of Finding Out.

At a dog show a short time ago two boys were noticed standing at a certain stand containing a fine specimen of a Skye-terrier.

It possessed such an abundance of hair as to give it more the appearance of a small door-mat than that of a member of the canine race.

The two young dog-fanciers seemed deeply interested over the dog, but evidently puzzled about something.

Having made a critical examination of the Skye-terrier, one of them was heard to say:

"Bill, which be its head, and which be it's tail?"

"I'm blest if I know," responded his chum. "Its a reg'ler puzzler. But I'll soon find out," he continued as a sudden idea seemed to strike him. "Let's prick the hanimal with a pin, and see which end he barks at."

C. R. C.

Not the Right Dog.

A street urchin was wont to play rather roughly with a good-natured bull-dog, owned by a shopkeeper of the neighbourhood. One day the boy was walking with a chum when he saw the dog approaching.

"Hi! There's Towser!" he cried. "Now see me stop him."

He stepped in front of the dog, with arms extended, and partially blocked the passage. The animal looked surprised, stopped, and evidently considered within himself what it would be best to do.

"I never knew him to act like that," said the joker. "He allers lays down on his back and rolls. I'll stir him up a little!"

With that he sprang at the dog, caught him by the ears, and began pulling him about.

"Towser" appeared evidently amazed, but he proved equal to the occasion. Fastening his teeth in the boy's trousers, in startling nearness to an expanse of bare knee, he held on like a vice.

Just at that moment the boy caught sight of an unfamiliar spot of white on the animal's head, and dropped his hold, at the same time taking to his heels, and leaving a goodly portion of cloth in the creature's mouth.

"Run, Pat, run!" he shouted to his chum. "He's gone and turned hisself into another dog!"

G. W. P.

The "Slipper" Dog.

Here is a story of a dog, which has the further merit of being true.

An Irish retriever, which had been taught to bring his master's slippers where required, was one day expelled from the drawing-room when visitors were calling, as he was making himself rather troublesome.

The dog, feeling himself in disgrace, in order to propitiate his master, went to every bedroom in the house and collected all the slippers and old shoes he could find, and deposited them outside the drawing-room door.

Imagine the feelings of the lady of the house when the door was opened for the departing visitors!

J. G. B.

A Head for Business.

Algernon: "Ah, my dear boy, so glad to see you. And how is your suit with Miss De Rich coming on?"

Augustus: "Weally, my boy, I can't say that I've made much powgwess so far, but I believe I've hit on the wight idea now. Do you see this dawg?"

"Of course. What a delightful pug; just like the one that Miss De Rich admired, by the way."

"It's the vewy one, my boy. She went into ecstacies over it at the dawg show."

"Ah, I see; so you've bought it for her?"

"No; for myself."

"For yourself? What good can that do you?"

"Why, my boy, can't you see? Ba jove, the dear girl will have to take me or lose the dawg, you know."

F. P.

A Dog that Started Trains.

There died, some time back, one who was spoken of by the local Press as "A very popular member of the staff of the Great Eastern Railway." He was a black and tan collie dog, and he was not appointed to the "position" which he held by the officers of the Company, but by himself.

Although self-appointed, time and habit brought about his recognition as assistant train-starter at an East Coast station. Through residence at the station he had acquired an instinct which told him the exact time at which each train should start from the terminus on its journey.

As the moment drew near the collie became restless and excited. As the bell uttered its first warning sound, he would scamper down the platform, and, planting himself close to the engine, bark furiously until he saw the wheels begin to move.

Having accomplished the starting of the train, as he supposed, he would rush to the guard's or conductor's van, and hurry the conductor to his post.

As the train passed out of the station he retired, and was seen no more until the time was near for another train to start.

M. I. N.

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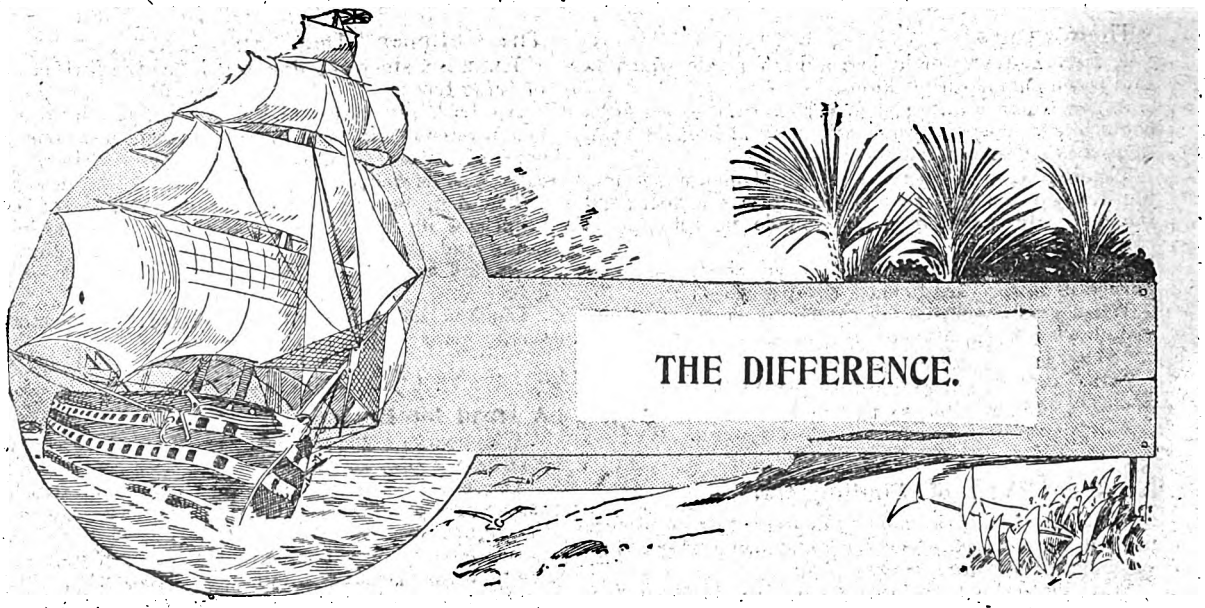

THE DIFFERENCE.

"WHAT is it you tell me? That you have promised to marry Ray Allan? And yet only last night I saw you walking and talking with Ned Bruce in a way that would lead people to suppose he was your devoted lover. Oh, Beth Adams! That I should ever have to acknowledge to myself that I believe you are a flirt!"

Beth laughed a little constrained, nervous laugh, and, going over to the fireplace, curled herself up on the hearthrug at her aunt's feet and leaned her head against her knee.

"Now, Aunt Myra, that is too bad, for you see you not only acknowledge it to yourself but to me also. And, auntie, people would be right in supposing Ned to be my lover—he, too, asked me last night to marry him."

"And you mean to tell me, Elizabeth Adams," giving the girl's shoulder a gentle push, "that you accepted Ray Allan when Ned Bruce wanted you?"

"Why, auntie, you wouldn't have me marry both of them, would you? And Ray asked me long before Ned. Besides, you see, I—love Ray, and I don't—seem—I mean I don't care about Ned in that way."

"Then all I can say is you must have a depraved taste or a very low estimate of manhood. To most women one look into Ned Bruce's honest, manly eyes would be worth more than Ray Allan's whole body, cynical face, long legs and all."

Then, seeing a hint of tears behind Beth's trembling lashes, she added hastily:

"There, there, child you shall decide for yourself in a thing like that—I've had my say." And she went hurriedly out, leaving Beth to dream on in the twilight.

How terribly dull it was, she thought, getting up from the hearthrug with a yawn, and going over to the window and looking out into the wintry twilight.

Only last night she was so supremely happy, and now everything seemed upside down. Even dear Aunt Myra, the only mother she had ever known, was scolding and calling her a flirt because she had promised to marry Ray Allan instead of Ned Bruce—and just when she was feeling so miserably sorry for Ned herself.

Poor, patient fellow. How kind he always was to her! How many times during the last few weeks she had wished he were not so good. It made her feel uncomfortable when he looked at her with those true, honest eyes of his.

But three months later, after she and Ray Allan had quarrelled and broken off their engagement, she thanked Heaven that Ned Bruce was kind to her.

"Ray and I have quarrelled; he has gone away for ever; I shall never love anybody else, Ned; but if you want me, knowing all this, you can have me."

That was what she had said to him, as she stood angry and white and proud one soft spring evening in the dim old garden. And he, believing that his own great love for her would break down every barrier at last, had opened his arms and taken her into their strong, safe shelter, his bonnie, beautiful Beth.

When the violets came, and the sweet spring winds were blowing white with the wild apple blossoms, they were married, and Beth went to live with Ned and his mother in their pretty cottage that nestled at the foot of the towering hills like a brown bird's nest; and the sweetest and the saddest year of Ned Bruce's life began.

Tourists flocked to the hills that summer. Hillsborough had never been so gay. The big hotel half a mile away was crowded. Ned Bruce kept several horses during the summer season for the purpose of taking these travellers up the hills, where some of them always wanted to go in pleasant weather for sight-seeing, on picnics, sketching expeditions, or the hundred and one pastimes that people of wealth and leisure find to while away the hours. Picturesque drives wound up to the tree-crowned summits, and the view from the top was grand.

Ned did not monopolise the business by any means; there were half-a-dozen other men who kept teams for the same purpose. But somehow, after a first acquaintance, this quiet, reserved young fellow, with his gentlemanly bearing and attentive kindness, was always given the preference.

A good many strangers were in the place this year, among them Sybil Dare, with her beautiful face and large fortune, and little Daisy Dare, her sister, who was just recovering from illness. In those long, delightful

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almost daily drives up the hills, Ned and Daisy became the best of friends.

At seven children love whomsoever they find lovable, and Ned had a charming way with little folk. The fever had left her very white and weak, but as she grew stronger and better acquainted with him she proved a winning little chatterbox.

Whatever pleased Daisy usually pleased her sister, too, who idolised the child, and it was not long before the haughty Sybil found herself watching each morning with Daisy for the kind gentleman with the handsome horses to take them up the hillside.

Sometimes they used to stay all day up there, "close to the sky," as Daisy said, Sybil sketching "sweet glimpses" that caught her fancy, a scraggy silver birch, maybe; or a tiny brooklet tumbling gaily down the hillside, with a glint of blue sky through the alders. And Daisy explored the ledges for bits of dainty moss and wild flowers.

Ned was busy all day, fetching and carrying other passengers, who only cared for the drive up and back again. But after a while, as the days grew hot, their all-day visits usually meant a book in a shady place for Sybil, while Daisy scurried about everywhere, until, tired out, she, too, sat down under the tree with her sister, to which cool retreat she used to coax Ned to come when he was not busy and read to her.

"Please come, Mr. Bruce," she would plead, clinging to his hand, "your voice is ever so much nicer than Sybil's. It makes the little shivers go down my back to hear you read, like it does when I go on a switchback. Did you ever go on a switchback, Mr. Bruce?"

"Yes," with an amused laugh.

"Nice, isn't it? Then I know you can understand about the shivers."

So he used to be persuaded sometimes, and, sitting in the cool shadows, would read in his clear, low voice until the yellow head nodded drowsily against his arm, or dropped fast asleep upon his knee.

And all summer long, while he was guide and entertainer for this yellow-haired sprite, his heart was down in the valley with his precious pale-faced Beth.

It seemed to him she grew whiter and sadder every day as the summer advanced. And—ah, keenest misery! he thought he knew the reason. Ray Allan was back in the village; he had been there a month or more. Nobody but the good God knew how he hated the sight of his handsome, imperious face.

Poor Ned! his loving heart was torn with jealousy, and every look into Beth's piteous white face stung him like a lash.

Early one sunny August morning Ned entered the hall with a bunch of dewy red roses just as Beth was crossing it.

"Here, darling, are some of Aunt Myra's roses for you."

"Oh!" rapturously. "Did you get them, Ned?"

"Yes, dear, I ran over while the horses were finishing their oats; I thought you would like them."

"Indeed, I do," burying her nose in the odorous half-open buds. "Oh, Ned, how kind you are to me."

She had been shy of his caresses of late, flushing and paling if he only looked at her; but just for one brief instant she seemed to have forgotten everything but the roses and him.

"Strange that I should be, isn't it?" smiling tenderly down into her upturned face. "Prove that you think me so by going with me up the hills this morning. Will you?"

But her face was hidden now; she was sobbing on his shoulder.

"Don't, darling!" a little break in the tender voice. "What is there to cry about?"

"You!" she answered with a passionate intonation.

There was a merry picnic on the hills that day, every conveyance was crowded. A band played somewhere among the soft shadows, and there was feasting and gay laughter.

Daisy was furious at the invasion of so many people. As she slipped her small hand into Ned's some time during the afternoon she whispered:

"I think it is horrid, Mr. Bruce. They've gone and sat down right under our dear tree, where we read. If it wasn't awful wicked I just wish God would make a big earthquake and shake 'em all off this hill, anyway. And, besides, you've had to go down and back so many times. I am sure your poor ponies are about suffocated this hot day. Oh, dear! it seems as if this has upset everything, doesn't it, Mr. Bruce? Come now, and help me find Sybil; she sent me to look for you, she wants some flowers up on the rocks and can't reach them."

And Ned went away with the child to find her sister, laughing amusedly at her funny talk. They found Sybil presently, and while Daisy ran back again to have one more peep at the intruders, Ned took off his hat and climbed slowly up the steep ledge to where above him swung the laurel spray she wanted, its dark green leaves and waxen buds waving in the soft breeze.

The tree branches about him tumbled his hair, his hands were scratched, and there was a rent in his sleeve, when a few minutes later he stood at the foot of the ledge once more, laughing a little at his battered appearance, as he held out the spray of laurel to Sybil Dare.

And then—was he dreaming?—the beautiful face, not cold and proud now, but pallid with passionate tenderness, leant towards him, her tremulous eyes sought his, her breath was on his cheek; he could feel the wild throbbing of the pulse in the white fingers that clutched his arm as she half-whispered, half-panted out his name:

"Oh, Ned—Ned!"

Just for one dizzy instant he gazed, fascinated, enthralled—the next, the hot blood rushed over his face in a torrent as he unclasped the jewelled fingers from his arm, picked up his hat, and said coldly:

"It is time to go home. I think my wife will be waiting for me."

They rode slowly down the sunset hills, utterly silent except for Daisy's prattle. She looked in amazement from one to the other of her mute companions, wondering why nobody talked.

At last, stealing her hand into Ned's, and nestling close up to him with a little shiver, she half sobbed:

"Seems as if the summer was all gone, doesn't it, Mr. Bruce? I believe I begin to feel cold already." Then turning to Sybil, "What makes you look so white and funny, Sybil? You almost make me want to cry. Have you got a chill like I did when I had the fever last spring?"

"Don't talk, darling, I am tired."

Down in the valley, where Mrs. Bruce and Beth sat on the veranda of the brown cottage watching the sunset, Beth asked quite suddenly, in a voice that she tried to make steady:

"Mother, have you noticed, or do I only imagine that Ned has changed a good deal this summer?"

"No, my daughter, I had not observed any change.

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Edward is always patient, especially when things go hard with him; he is so very patient!"

The sweet, kind voice, so like Ned's, faltered a little as she spoke, and she took off her gold-rimmed glasses to wipe the tears that blurred them.

"Ned," Beth said, creeping close to his side as they sat in the garden in the moonlight that night, and nervously turning round and round the ring he wore on his little finger, "will Sybil Dare stay in Hillsborough through the autumn, do you think?"

"Sybil Dare?" a touch of scorn in the kind voice. "I hardly think so, though I certainly do not know what she intends doing. Why?"

"Nothing, only I hoped—I mean I thought—oh, Ned, don't you understand? Why will you make me say it—the hideous tale that is in everybody's mouth—that Sybil Dare is in love with her handsome driver—that she goes to the hills each day for the sake of being with you. I believe my heart is breaking. Oh, Ned," pantingly, "has my coldness, my indifference, driven you away from me? Answer me—do you care for Sybil Dare?"

"Good Heavens, no! Not if she were the only woman in the world. Oh, my darling, you have believed this tale, and all the while I have been suffering tortures, because I thought my little white-faced girl was pining for Ray Allan's favour."

"Oh, Ned."

"Oh, Beth."

Looking into each other's eyes they both laughed.

"What a muddle we have made of life so far. I began it first by trying to imagine my silly heart was breaking for Ray Allan, who was never worthy of any woman's regard. Then you kept it up by failing to understand how entirely I soon grew to love you, and we have both ended it by doubting each other all the summer."

"Thank Heaven it is ended, and we understand at last," he said, in a joyous voice.

* * * * *

In a princely home in the city, where a beautiful woman dwells, you can see, between the quick opening and closing of her chamber door, a picture hanging on the wall. A hillside, tree-shadowed against a cloudless summer sky. In the foreground two figures; a man's face, winning and tender, smiling down with his beautiful eyes at the little yellow-haired girl whose hand he is holding. And down in the corner, framed in with the pictured faces, a spray of withered mountain laurel.

A. M.

Sister: "Has she treated you falsely and broken off the engagement?"

Brother: "No, that's the trouble. She insists on keeping her engagements—all of them."

Doctor: "Do you know the effects of getting too much mercury in your system?"

Delny: "Yis, doctor, Oi'd be a thermometer."

The sermon of the best preacher in the world will not make so much impression upon a congregation, as the sudden pattering of rain on the window-panes of a church containing two hundred new summer hats.

"Still they come," wrote the reporter, who in his secret heart called himself a "journalist."

"But no," he mused, "that is hardly appropriate for a headline to the preliminary account of the women's rights convention."

And he carefully crossed out the word "still."

"What!" cried the labour leader as he entered the house, "no supper yet!"

"No," replied his wife, calmly. "You will remember that I began work at six o'clock this morning."

"What has that to do with it?" he demanded.

"My eight-hour watch ran down at two o'clock this afternoon," she answered.

"Oh, Harold!" thrillingly exclaimed the lovely heroine, throwing her arms about his neck, "do you still love me as of old?"

"My darling," said the stage hero, with rapture. "My soul's delight! Keep your awkward hoofs off that corn of mine, or I'll jerk that jute wig off your head!"

But this was in a lower tone.

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A HORSE THIEF.

THE first prisoner that "graced" the new jail at Oakhurst, in South Australia, was a young fellow named Dave Chillet.

He was a stranger in this romantic community, which went far towards proving that he had stolen the horse. It was a fact that a roan mare was stolen and that circumstances pointed with a steady finger at the stranger. This being quite sufficient, he was put in jail.

Oakhurst could hardly be classed as a village; indeed it scarcely held the dignity of a cross-road in point of importance.

Its buildings consisted of a court-house, which served as a church; a general supply shop, a few "residences," and the jail, a strong log cabin with an iron-grated door.

John Morgan, sheriff and jailer, lived within a few yards of the jail.

Netty Morgan, the old man's daughter, returned from a visit in an adjoining neighbourhood, one evening, and was told that a prisoner had at last been secured for the jail and that it was her duty to feed him. At this appointment to high and important trust the girl jumped up and clapped her hands.

"Oh, that's fine!" she cried.

"Glad you like it," said the old man, "for I don't want nothing to do with a horse thief, and your mother says she wouldn't feed one to save his life."

"I don't like a horse thief better than you an' mother do," she quickly replied, colouring and dropping her hands with a limpness that marked the decline, if not the death, of her enthusiasm. And if I have to take care of him just because you think I like him better than the rest of you do, why, I won't have anything to do with him."

"Come, now, Netty, I don't want any of your foolishness. Of course you don't like a horse thief any better than the rest of us do, but I want you to take charge of him and feed him until after the court meets and tries him. If you don't I'll employ Nan Stokes——"

"I'll look after him, dad. What sort of a looking man is he?"

"Looks well enough. It's the way he acts that got him into trouble."

"I think I'll go out there and see what he's like."

"You can't see out there now. It's too dark."

"I can take a light. If he's my prisoner I shall do as I please about him."

She took down a spluttering tallow candle and went out to the jail.

"Hallo in there," she said, holding up the candle high above her head and attempting to shake the grated door.

There was a rustling of straw and then a voice answered.

"Well."

"Come up here so I can see you," said the girl.

He came to the door.

"I can't see you very well now," she remarked, trying to throw more light on him and pressing her face against the bars.

"I never saw a live horse thief, and I want to see what you look like."

"I'm not a horse thief, miss or madam, I don't know which."

"Miss, if you please. I'm only eighteen years old. I can't see whether you stole that horse or not."

He laughed with a loud haw-haw, and then said, "just like a woman."

"Of course, for I am a woman, or the making of one, anyhow. Well, I'll have to wait until to-morrow before I can settle your case. Oh, I almost forgot to tell you that I am your keeper, and you can't have anything to eat except what I've a mind to give you."

"I hope, then, that your mind is liberal, miss."

"I don't know about that; I'll have to wait until I get a good look at you."

"Just like a woman again," he said.

"Of course, I'm just like a woman," she replied.

"And I never before had cause to wish for good looks," he rejoined.

She went away without saying another word, and the prisoner went back and lay down on his straw bed.

* * * * *

The sun's rays were shining through the bars when he awoke the next morning, and an old hen and several chickens stood pecking near the door.

The chickens moved hastily away and then the girl stood there looking at him.

"Good-morning."

"Good morning, miss."

He went to the door and smiled at her.

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"Your mouth isn't so pretty that you need to smile," she said; and then, after studying him closely, added, "I don't know whether you stole that horse or not. When I look at you this way (moving to the left) I think you did, but when I stand here (moving to the right) I think you didn't."

"Well, then," he replied, pointing to the right, "you'd better feed me from that side."

"Oh, you are just like a man," she laughed, "but as I'm just like a woman, I'm afraid that I'll have to look at you from the worst side."

"If I were a woman I know you would, but as I am not, I thought that you would seek to see me at my best."

"Now, Mr. Smart, just for that I'll not give you much of a breakfast," and she didn't either; but she made up for it at noontime.

"I have brought my sewing," she said, "and am going to sit out here in the shade and talk to you. This is the first time I ever had a man where I could talk to him as long as I wanted to."

He looked at her with a pleased expression, and she sat down and began to sew.

"Where are you from?" she asked, looking up.

"Oh, from almost everywhere."

"How long have you been in this colony?"

"Only a few days—hadn't been here but a short time when I was arrested."

"That was bad—that is, if you are innocent."

"And I am, miss—what is your name?"

"Netty."

"And I am innocent, Miss Netty."

"I don't know, but I expect the court will settle that point when it meets."

"Yes, but I'm afraid it will not be settled in the right way."

"I don't know about that, but I know it will be settled."

"I hope it will soon be settled one way or the other, for I don't like the idea of staying very long in this hut."

"Yes, but when it is settled you may go to a worse one."

"That's consoling, surely; but do you really think they will send me to prison?"

"What a funny question to ask one! How do I know? But tell me how they come to accuse you."

"Oh, they found me walking along the road and took me up. I had no horse."

"But Ned Brown says that you passed his house riding one, and if that's the case, what did you do with it?"

"I did not pass his house riding a horse."

"But he will swear you did, and will give it as his opinion that you were afraid of being caught and sold the horse to somebody."

"Get up here, little girl, and look at me—look into my eyes."

She got up, and after gazing into his eyes, said:

"No, you didn't steal a horse. You couldn't do such a thing, and I will believe you no matter who swears against you."

"I could kiss you for those generous words."

"No, you couldn't for I wouldn't let you. I wouldn't want a man to come kissing me for my words. If he couldn't kiss me for myself he shouldn't kiss me at all."

"You can safely talk of kissing to a man in jail. How long before the court meets?"

"About a week."

"As I am the only man to be tried I suppose they will get through my case in short order."

"I suppose so; and I do hope they won't send you to prison, for now that I know that you didn't steal that horse I like you ever so much."

"And I like you," he said.

"Oh, of course," she laughed, "for a man always likes anybody that feeds him. I think your eyes are just lovely."

"You make me blush, little miss; and wouldn't that be a novel sight—a blushing jail-bird?"

She fed him on chicken and biscuits, and at evening sang to him. She declared that he was her first and only beau.

"But," she always added: "I would hate you if I thought you stole a horse."

One morning she brought him more than the usual amount of food, and when he marvelled at the abundance she said:

"This must do for a whole day."

"Why so?"

"Because I am going away and won't be back until late this evening."

The day was a weary one to the prisoner and he longed for evening. The sun went down, the stars came out.

A dog whined and then a cheerful voice said:

"I'm back again."

"Yes," he cried, "and just in time to give a soft touch to the hardest day I ever spent."

"Oh, what a flatterer you are! But you didn't steal the horse, did you?"

"No, little girl. I'll swear I didn't."

"I know you didn't—I know you couldn't. I've got news for you."

"What is it?"

"The court meets to-morrow."

"I am glad, and yet I'm afraid."

"You must not let them see that you are scared. I'll sit by you during the trial."

She did sit beside him the next day, and when the judge, after hearing the verdict, sent him to prison for five years, she hung her head and wept.

It was evening and the prisoner was taken back to his cell.

A dark night came on, and the wretched man, knowing that on the morrow he should be taken away, lay on his straw bed, wishing that he might die. Hours passed. He was deserted.

The dog whined.

"Keep quiet, Jack," someone whispered, and the girl said, softly:

"You thought I had forgotten you."

"Yes."

"But I hadn't. I wanted the key and had to wait till Dad went to sleep. They had a man to guard you, but I made him drunk. Dad's drunk, too," she giggled.

"What are you going to do?" the prisoner asked, almost breathlessly.

"I'm going to let you out, but you must do exactly as I tell you and not say a word. If you try to run they will catch you to-morrow, but if you follow my plan they never will find you. Come on, now."

She had unlocked the door.

"Come round this way and don't say a word. There's the o'd dog, but he doesn't count. If he had, I'd have made him drunk, too. This way, now."

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They went into the wood, where the timber and underbrush were so thick that they had to pick their way along.

"Let's stop here and rest a minute," she said.

"Are we far enough away?"

"Yes, and they can't find us anyhow when they're drunk."

She giggled again.

"Little woman, you are an angel."

"No, simply a girl that doesn't want to see an innocent man go to prison."

"Heaven bless you!" he said.

"And may Heaven bless you!" she replied, "and bless you, and bless you, and keep on a-blessing you till you are safe from the people about here."

"But what will they do with you, little girl?"

"They won't do anything to me. Dad will scold but that will be all."

"But won't the officers of the law put you in jail?"

"It wouldn't be good for any one of them if he was to try it. Mother says I'm awful when I get cross. We'd better go on now."

"All right, but don't you think you'd better go back?"

"If I was to leave you now you'd wander about in the woods till they found you."

"What time do you suppose it is?" he asked.

"About three o'clock.

"And where shall we get to if we keep on walking?"

"We'll get to the river about daylight."

"And then what?"

"I will show you."

Sometimes, coming upon a place less dense, they walked briskly, and then, entering the thick underbrush, they were compelled to pick their way along.

"It's growing lighter" he said.

"Yes," she answered, "and the river isn't very far now."

They trudged on, catching here and there faint glimpses of the coming sunrise.

"Here we are at the river," she cried.

"And now what?" he asked.

She took hold of his hand, and, as she led him down a bank, said:

"We'll have to go up stream some distance, but not very far. I know these woods even in the dark."

"I don't understand you."

"See!" she pointed to a boat. "You know I was gone a long time the other day. Well, I brought that boat over here, me and an old man."

He uttered an exclamation of surprise, and she giggled.

Still holding his hand, she led him to the boat.

"Row to the other side, and float down under the willows," she said.

He stepped in the boat, still holding her hand.

"I must say good-bye," he said.

"Good-bye," she whispered still holding his hand and looking back towards her home.

A short silence followed.

"Netty," he said, "I cannot leave you this way—I cannot deceive you. I did steal that horse."

"Oh!" she sobbed, and threw her arms about his neck.

"Don't, angel, I tell you that I stole the horse."

"I'm going with you," she said, and the boat floated out on the current of the sun-blazing stream.

G. KNIGHT.

ARE YOU TOO FAT?

SUMMER HEAT AND OBESITY.

Summer heat, with the outdoor enjoyments which come in its train, is a source of unmixed delight to all whose physical condition is sound. The full feast of pleasure to which hospitable Nature at this season invites mankind is not, however, for those whose infirmities forbid them to undergo, without serious discomfort, a considerable amount of bodily fatigue. To those in particular who are the victims of excessive corpulence, the arrival of the genial summer warmth serves chiefly as a painful reminder that, for them, the delights of long woodland rambles, the climbing of mountain tops, and all the adventurous ways of flood and field are prohibited joys. The palpitating heart, the reeling brain, and the possibly deadly sunstroke, which are the concomitants of obesity, banish all the pleasant anticipations which once come with the advent of the glad summer tide. How much of this deprivation of enjoyment and positive misery is absolutely and easily avoidable may be learned by consulting Mr. F. Cecil Russell's "Corpulency and the Cure" (256 pages), a little work whose popularity is proved by the fact that its eighteenth edition has just been issued. This fact, too, indicates, in some degree, the wide area now covered by Mr. Russell's wonderful success as an expert in the reduction of excessive fat. His process, which is absolutely safe and pleasant, is so rapid in its operation, that any over-corpulent lady or gentleman can easily get rid of all unnecessary weight in a very few weeks so as to be able, before the autumn is with us, to enjoy the delightful feeling (and the appearance too) of renewed youth and energy. Mr. Russell makes no mystery of the nature of his curative preparation—apparently miraculous as are its effects in simultaneously reducing weight and increasing appetite—the consequently larger amount of food being consumed with impunity. He prints, therefore, his recipe in his singularly suggestive book, which may be obtained, post free, by sending three penny stamps to his offices, Woburn House, 27 Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.

—*Gloucester Standard.*

[AN EXPLANATION.]

The publication of the following testimonial demands an explanation, having regard to the practice—which I have consistently followed, and to which I shall strictly adhere in the future—of keeping private the names and addresses of correspondents who consult me with regard to corpulency. In this special case there are ample reasons for making this single exception to the rule. The letter speaks for itself. It is, in the language of the day, a "record" in the history of the cure of obesity. That a gentleman—the more particularly because he lives in a tropically hot region such as Brazil is—should have achieved successful results by the use of my preparation in a hundred cases, constitutes an epoch in the annals of this department of pathology. Mr. Upton's enthusiasm in the cause of reducing corpulency is, doubtless, explained by his own satisfactory experience in undergoing my treatment; but, all the same, his missionary zeal in the cause of anti-corpulency is something of which I am naturally proud. That this gentleman is conscious of the beneficient potency of the preparation in the case of persons who suffer from heat through their obesity, is evident from the fact that he not only authorizes, but suggests the publication of his letter, urbi et orbi.—(F. C. RUSSELL.)

F. UPTON.

CAIXA DO CORREIO, 56,
S. PAULO
(BRAZIL).
Telegrammas: UPTON—S. Paulo.
Codigos Telegraphicos
A. B. C. 4th (Edition)
A 1

S. Paulo.

De W. CLAUSON—THUE.

F. C. Russell, Esq.,
Woburn House, Store Street,
Bedford Square, London.

Dear Sir,

I am in receipt of your esteemed favour 3rd ultimo, contents of which has had my careful attention.

I am sure you will be pleased to hear that I have over 100 persons here under your treatment, and without one single exception, all with most satisfactory results, for I take an interest in the business, and have been most careful in exacting the regime you prescribe, which I have had translated and printed, besides the good information I can afford from my personal experience, and by the complete cure I obtained by your treatment I cannot conceive how anybody can be the willing bearer of a burden of fat, having so efficacious and easy a cure as can be effected by the use of a few bottles of your anti-corpulent preparation.

I remain, yours truly,
F. UPTON.

SPECIAL OFFER

To all Readers of "SHORT STORIES" suffering from Obesity.

Mr. Russell will be pleased to forward, post free, a copy of his book, "CORPULENCY AND THE CURE," 256 pages, in a sealed plain envelope, to all applicants forwarding 3d. in stamps to Woburn House, 27 Store Street, London, W.C.

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F. HOPE JONES.

His Lecture at Grantown on Ambition and Perseverance.

ESTEEMED FELLOW CITIZENS,—While I cannot say that this is the proudest moment of my life and worth thirty years of toil and poverty, I can conscientiously declare that I am pleased beyond expression to note the cultivated and corpulent audience in this hall to-night.

The pink handbills scattered through the town with lavish hands have given you the subject of my lecture, and it only remains for me to take up a collection for the benefit of the unbelieving heathen of China and proceed with the business in hand. I was asked this evening if this would be a spiritualistic *séance*; also if anything would be said in favour of a new parliamentary candidate. Make your minds easy on that score. My lectures are all perfectly straightforward, and I never wander from the subjects given.

There are tens of thousands of men in this world who are waiting for money to help them begin a career. They are sitting about on the fences, loafing round the shops and walking up and down the streets looking for some one to give them a start in life. It never occurs to them that they have the capital wanted right at hand if they would only make use of it—ambition and perseverance.

Our first picture this evening may not be recognized at first glance, but after consideration you will be able to identify it as the man who upset Europe for years—the Emperor Napoleon. For years and years as a young man he hadn't a halfpenny left on Saturday night after paying his bill. He had to wear old clothes, smoke cheap cigars and lodge in an attic. Even the cross-eyed daughter of his landlady and the bow-legged butcher at the corner looked down on him.

Nobody believed that young man had it in him to make a patent churn, but they were mistaken. He had ambition and perseverance. All he was waiting for was to get his hand well in, and when he finally got it in he went sailing to the top like a rocket. He jumped from an attic to the head of an army, from red herrings and dry bread to the fare of an emperor.

He said to himself, "I will conquer," and conquer he did. You who are wearing out the seats in the park night after night as you wait for someone to come along and give you a help up can do as Napoleon did. You may have to chop wood and shovel snow for a year or two, but ambition can't be kept down, and perseverance is never knocked out for more than a day.

Some of you in this representative audience have heard of Christopher Columbus. He was a man who loafed at the corners for years, waiting for his career to come along. He was always behind in his house rent, always in debt for his provisions and there were people who didn't hesitate to tell him that he wasn't good for much.

Our artist has caught him as he loafed about town with his dog at his heels, and the observer can scarcely believe that fame lurked under that old hat. It did, however. One morning Christopher woke up loaded with ambition. He had made up his mind to discover something. I don't suppose he was at all particular what it was at first, but after a little he decided on discovering America. That was ambition. Perseverance didn't come in till after he had met with disappointment.

No one believed in his theories. No one would lend him a shilling to forward his plans. For several years, nearly all his time was spent between cadging free lunches and trying to make folks believe that Spain and Portugal were only half the world.

He finally began to make himself believed, and after discouragements enough to have driven most men to give up in despair, he was fitted out for a voyage and America was duly discovered.

Suppose that Christopher's ambition hadn't been aroused? Suppose that after he had met with all those disappointments and given up in despair a few times he had lost his perseverance? I tell you, my friends—and F. Hope Jones is a man who always knows what he is talking about—America had the closest kind of a shave from being left out of the swim, and gratitude should force the Americans to name all sorts of places and things after the man who discovered them and gave them a place in the world.

Take the case of Cæsar. When his father died, there wasn't £2 in cash in the house, and so many creditors filled the front yard that the funeral had to be put off for two days. Coal was up, house rent advancing, and a man might hunt the town from end to end and not find a job.

Young Cæsar had to confront a situation which might well have appalled a stouter heart. He had neither trade nor capital, and about forty different creditors were nagging at him for the old man's debts. He went out and sat down on the garden wall to think things over.

Our artist caught him as he sat. Should he throw his hands up in despair and go out of the game, or should he call ambition and perseverance to his aid and conquer fate?

He decided on the latter course, and within an hour he was fairly making things go.

The world is always with an ambitious man. When it was seen that young Cæsar was persevering for all he was worth, people stopped to encourage him, and it wasn't a year before he was away up the ladder. You know what Cæsar did. Ambition and perseverance carried him to the top, and he remained there to the day of his death.

I could go on and give you the history of Socrates, Pliny, Plato, and numerous others. You would find in each and every case that ambition and perseverance made them what they were.

Take my own case, for instance. Modesty forbids me to make any extended reference, but in a spirit of confidence I wish to observe that but for ambition I should to-day be selling a patent washing machine in the provinces, and but for perseverance the name of F. Hope Jones would never have stood out in letters a foot high in the *Grantown Bugler*, as was the case only yesterday.

My liabilities are £50, and my capital fifty pence, but I cannot be kept down. Like the phœnix bird, I shall rise from the ashes, and, like Columbus, Napoleon and Cæsar, I shall climb to the top and stick there like gum to a plum-tree.

C. B. LEWIS.

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THE
BEST OF ALL BEVERAGES
AND THE
CHEAPEST.

GOOD!
IT'S
MASON'S
Extract
of Herbs

8 Gallons
Prime Beer
for 6d.

Sample Free for 9 Stamps.
AGENTS WANTED EVERYWHERE.

NEWBALL & MASON,
NOTTINGHAM.

JOHN NOBLE
Costumes by Parcel Post

Sent without delay direct from the Largest Firm of Costume Makers in the World, and guaranteed to be exceptionally high value in cut, material, and finish, and very far superior in make to ordinary shop-bought costumes. Satisfaction given to all customers, and orders promptly executed or money refunded.

PATTERNS SENT POST FREE
(Together with the New Summer Fashion Catalogue)

of the very durable Fabrics in which these Costumes are made—The John Noble Cheviot Serge and The John Noble Costume Coating.

A Full Dress Length of either Cloth (6 yards 52 inches wide) for 7/6; carr. 8d.

Sizes in Stock of Ladies' Costumes are: 34, 36, and 38 in. round bust (under arms); Waist: 24, 26, and 28 in.; Skirts being 38, 40, and 42 in. long in front. Any other size made to measure, 1/6 extra.

Colours: Black, Navy, Brown, Myrtle, Fawn, Grey, Royal Blue, and Khaki.

MODEL 200

A thoroughly well-made Eton Costume, cut and finished in an up-to-date style, with the newest shaped full Costume Skirt. Price only 10/6 complete; 10/6 Costume, carriage 6d. Skirt alone, 5/6; carriage, 5d. Or can be supplied in the fashionable strong Khaki Drill for 13/6, carriage 6d.

GOOD STRAW HAT, as sketch, 2/11; carriage, 6d.

SUMMER DRESS FABRICS.
A large Box of Patterns lent to select from and sent carriage paid.

Please name *Short Stories* when writing.

JOHN NOBLE Ltd.,
BROOK STREET MILLS, MANCHESTER.

Send for Dr. EVANS'S (U.S.A.)
PAMPHLET ON NERVOUS DISEASES
OF ALL KINDS.

THIS PAMPHLET describes all the symptoms which arise from Diseases of the NERVOUS SYSTEM. It is up-to-date, having been compiled after years of labour and experience in the Treatment of these Maladies. It is complete, practical, and can be readily understood and acted upon. It gives pure and simple advice to sufferers. Send stamped addressed envelope to GEORGE WRIGHT, ESQ., Colne House, REMBRANDT ROAD, LEE, LONDON, S.E.

WHY BE FAT?

When a lady, who has discovered a simple means of Self-Cure will be happy to send particulars of same to any sufferer from this distressing complaint. Free on receipt of stamped addressed envelope. ADDRESS:

Mrs. TREVOR WELLS,
63 HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON, W.C.

DON'T LET MOTHS
RUIN YOUR FURS
OR BLANKETS

KEATING'S POWDER
PRESERVES THEM.

KILLS BLACKBEETLES & FLEAS
Tins 3d., 6d. & 1/-

TOO STOUT

I was for years; by chance I came across a simple home remedy that reduced me from 17st. to 10st. 12lb., and I will willingly send particulars free to any sufferer enclosing stamp. Mrs. L. E. FELL, 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

A SUM of from 12s. to 25s. per week can be earned in spare hours or evenings by either sex everywhere.—Send addressed envelope for particulars to Box 24, Eclipse Works, 89 Aldersgate Street, E.C.

HAIR DESTROYED.

Send me an envelope (stamped and addressed) and I will tell you how to remove all superfluous hair free of charge. (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Miss E. V. (Room 3), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

NOSE MACHINES. LEES RAY. S.S. Dept., South Castle St. Liverpool, has specialist on Ugly and Red Noses. Send stamp for particulars of his patent scientific Nose Improvers. Red Nose Cure, medically approved, 3/9. Outstanding Ear Machines 11/6.

SULPHOLINE LOTION.

For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

SHILLING BOTTLES.

IMPORTANT TO WEAK MEN

And those suffering from nervous exhaustion, loss of vigour, Varicocele, &c., can be successfully and permanently cured without operation or detention from business by THE DR. COLLINS most improved and rational method medical science has ever yet produced.

Particulars and proofs of successful cures sent free on receipt of address.

THE COLLINS REMEDY CO.,
Gothic House, 9 Erskine Street, Liverpool.

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ON MONTHLY PAYMENTS. Enormous stock. New and second-hand. FROM 10s. MONTHLY. Carriage paid. Free wheels and rim brakes. Illustrated Price Lists Post Free.—THE SILVER QUEEN CYCLE CO. Ltd., 221 Tottenham Court Road, London, W.

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Every man suffering from Varicocele and the allied troubles, should send for treatise, describing their Causes, Symptoms, Results, and Successful and Painless Treatment without surgical operation or the use of cumbersome trusses and electrical appliances. Will be sent sealed, post free, three stamps.

S. S. MURRAY,
7 Southampton Row, London, W.C.

ALL FAT PEOPLE

can safely Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently by taking TRILENE TABLETS (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

Send 2s. 6d. to THE TRILENE CO., Sole Proprietors, 66 Finsbury Pavement, London.

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 23 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 14 stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 28lb., and I am cured." Mrs. Darnley-Smith, of Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, says: "Tablets have reduced me very much." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Comston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

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THE BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

IN this competition a prize of £2 will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

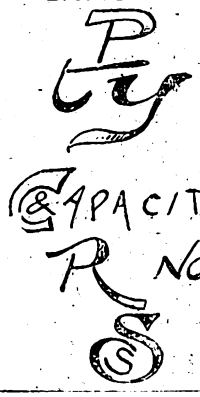
Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels, to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, SHORT STORIES, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by first post on Monday, July 9th, 1900.

EACH OF THE FOLLOWING REPRESENTS A SENTENCE.

What are they?

No. 153.



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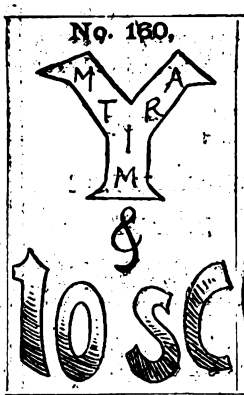

No. 161.

No. 162.

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Nos. 130 to 135.

THE prize of £2 has been awarded this week to Miss Aida Birch, 12 Cathcart Hill, Junction Road, N., whose solution was the first correct one dealt with.

A copy of "Francois the Valet," by G. W. Appleton, has been sent to:

John O'Sullivan, 17 Coburg Street, Cork.
Miss A. Moore, 69 Huskisson Street, Liverpool.
Mrs. Emma Cameron, 2 Salisbury Terrace, Cherry Bank, Perth.
Miss Theresa Murphy, 95 Spencer Street, Everton, Liverpool.
C. Spence, 214 Dalston Lane, N.E.
Miss M. Brownhill, Avondale High School, Sutton Coldfield.
C. A. Puddicombe, The Retreat, Plympton, Devonshire.
Miss Mary Ryan, 21 Abbott's Road, East Ham.
Mrs. Allen, 51 Jedburgh Street, North Side, Clapham Common.
George Irvine, 36 Northgate, Hartlepool.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES.

Nos. 136 to 141.

No. 136. Black, slack, stack, stalk, shale, whale, while, white.

No. 137. TOMATO SALAD.

No. 138. "Well begun is half done."

No. 139.

W	A	S	T	E
A	C	T	O	R
S	T	O	N	E
T	O	N	I	C
E	R	E	C	T

No. 140. EVANGELINE.

No. 141. Foster, Forest, Softer.

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SEE SPECIAL OFFER AT FOOT OF PAGE.

KOKO

FOR THE HAIR

UNDER ROYAL PATRONAGE.

Eradicates Scurf and Dandriff.

Prevents Hair Falling and Turning Grey.

Promotes Growth.

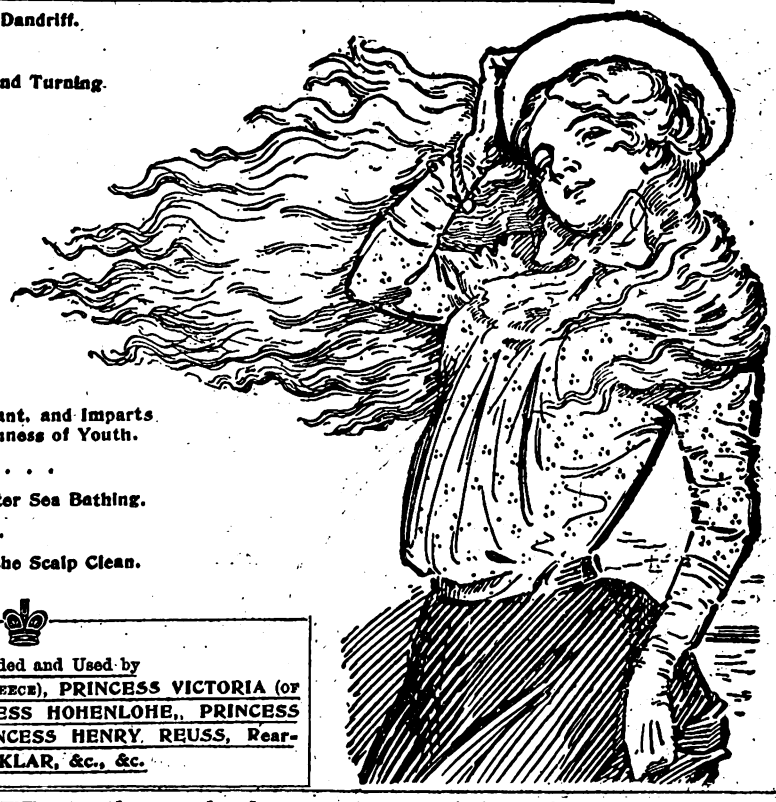
Contains no Dye.

Is delightfully Cooling, Refreshing, and Invigorating.

Keeps the Hair Soft and Pliant, and Imparts to it the Lustre and Freshness of Youth.

Invaluable for Use after Sea Bathing.

Allays Irritation and Keeps the Scalp Clean.



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H.M. THE QUEEN (OF GREECE), PRINCESS VICTORIA (OF SCHAUMBURG-LIPPE), PRINCESS HOHENLOHE, PRINCESS MARIE (OF GREECE), PRINCESS HENRY REUSS, Rear-Adm'ral TINKLAR, &c., &c.

SPECIAL OFFER to those who have not yet tried **KOKO.**

A 4/6 TRIAL BOTTLE for 2/-.

Any person forwarding this Coupon and P.O. for Two Shillings, and 5 Stamps to pay postage, packing, &c., will receive immediately for trial, by Parcel Post, under cover, prepaid, **One Regular 12-oz. Bottle of Koko for the Hair,** the price of which is 4/6, provided it is ordered within **ten days from the date of this offer.** In no case will more than one bottle be sent for the use of the same person on this coupon, as we make the offer solely for trial, knowing it creates a demand when once used; and this large bottle gives it a fair trial. We find it better to thus practically **give away** one bottle to make a customer than to spend large amounts in advertising. **Any person into whose hands this offer comes may avail themselves of it.** Address all Orders with Coupons to—

THE KOKO-MARICOPAS CO., LTD., 16 BEVIS MARKS, LONDON.

Orders may be sent with this Coupon after the expiration of date, provided we are then issuing these trial bottle Coupons, and if we are not, the money will be returned. This Coupon will be received at 16 BEVIS MARKS, E.C., or 113 REGENT STREET, LONDON, W., and 2/- only will be required when presented personally.

KOKO is sold by all Chemists, &c., at 2/6 and 4/6 per bottle.

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"OROCO" TABLE MATS.

10 *for* ONE SHILLING *Post Free.*

Consisting of 6 Plate, 2 Meat Dish, and 2 Vegetable Dish sizes.
AN ELEGANT TABLE DECORATION.
A PERFECT PROTECTION FROM HOT DISHES AND PLATES.

"OROCO" MANUFACTURING CO., WIGAN.

WASHES EVERYTHING

TO BE HAD OF ALL GROCERS &c.
MANUFACTORY: DUKINFIELD, MANCHESTER.

ZEBRA Grate Polish

No Hard Work.

LILLIE POWDER

Youth and Beauty

OBTAINED BY THE CONSTANT USE OF LILLIE POWDER.

All Men should use it after Shaving.
Ladies should never be without it.

"The LILLIE POWDER" has long been a favourite with all who pride themselves on their complexions. Try the LILLIE POWDER. I am sure you will like it."—*The Gentlewoman.*

"I have always used your Lillie Powder after shaving, and have no wish to *ever* use any other."—**Seymour Hicks.**

Most Beneficial.
"Lillie Powder is most beneficial to the skin, and I shall always use it."—**Phyllis Broughton.**

Most Exquisite.
"I think your new Lillie Powder most exquisite."
—**Adelina Patti.**

ASK YOUR CHEMIST TO GET IT FOR YOU,

but be sure it bears the above label beautifully printed in Red and Black upon a delicate Pink Paper. Insist on LILLIE POWDER, as substitutes may be injurious.

Invented by Mrs. Langtry. Prepared under the strict supervision of Mr. Wm. Clarkson (Her Majesty's Perruquier).

THREE TINTS—WHITE, FLESH-COLOUR, AND CREAM.

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